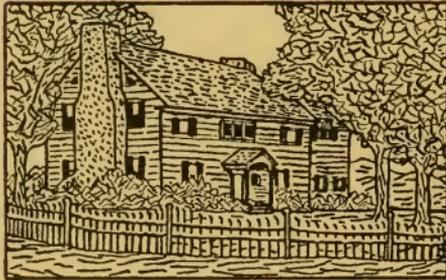


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OF

The Post Office,

— CONTAINING —

A History of the World's Postal Service, with Interesting Accounts of Ancient Methods of Carrying the Mails; Early Postal Service in the United States, including the Rates and Methods of a Hundred Years Ago; A Complete History of the Postage Stamps of all Nations, and a Statement of the High Prices Paid for Collections; Particulars of the Railway Mail Service; Thrilling Account of the Lightning Trip with the First Overland Mail; A Description of the Washington Headquarters, Dead Letter Office, Growth of the New York Post Office, Inside Workings of the Boston Post Office, Post Office Savings Banks, Queer Errors, Laughable Mishaps, etc., etc.

“The growth of the Post Office means the increase of a spirit of education, the development of trade and commerce, and the knitting more closely together of all classes of communities in the bonds of civilization.”

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THE STORY OF THE POST-OFFICE.

CHAPTER I.

ANCIENT HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S POSTAL SERVICE.

The Prime Factor of Civilization.—A Glance Two Thousand Years Backward.—How Julius Cæsar's Letters were Mailed.—The Star Routes of the Incas.—Postal Systems in the Middle Ages.—France and England copy Persia and Rome.—Why it Became a Government Monopoly.—Foreign Correspondence Discouraged.—The First Postal System for the General Public.—A Man who Knew Nothing About the Post-Office Reformed the Whole System.—Modern History of the Postal Service.

THE PRIME FACTOR OF CIVILIZATION.

There is a debt of gratitude due the postal service which but few people appreciate. It is one of the prime factors of our boasted civilization. A country without postal facilities is out of the world. It might as well be located in the moon, for all the benefit it is to mankind. One of the first things a nation must establish before it can successfully enter the race in commerce, in science and in the arts, is a means by which its people can communicate quickly and easily amongst themselves and with other nations.

What would the manufacturer or merchant do if, when he came to his office he found no batch of orders from the mails? Imagine, if you are able, the effect which the stoppage of the postal service for one month would have upon the commerce of the country. Hosts of undertakings, employing thousands of men, would be obliged to suspend operations. The snow blockade of 1887 gives a faint idea of the reli-

ance placed upon the mails. Clerks sat around in offices, and merchants twirled their thumbs, just because Uncle Sam's mail had to stop work on account of the snow storm. The cry of the world for increased facilities of mail communication is based upon sound principles. Perhaps a brief survey of the ancient postal systems may make us realize that in this particular, at least, we are far better off than they were in days of old.

A GLANCE TWO THOUSAND YEARS BACKWARD.

The birth of postal communication, like that of so many of our greatest blessings, is lost in obscurity.

In 2nd Chronicles we read, "The posts went with the letters from the King and his Princes throughout all Israel."

Job says, "Now my days are swifter than the post; they flee away."

The Assyrian and Persian monarchs established stations at a day's journey apart, where they kept saddled horses all ready for the courier to leap on to a fresh one and so carry with great speed the orders of his monarch. The Roman Empire, however, was probably the first to organize a postal service. This was not established for commerce or for the needs of the people, but solely for military and administrative purposes. Old Rome in her palmyest days was much inferior to the smallest town in the United States, as far as postal communication was concerned. She ruled the whole civilized world, but she didn't have a decent post-office. Poor Rome! Her enterprise, however, has left us one word which is incorporated in every postal system. The word "post" originated

in the fact that Roman couriers were stationed at posts certain distances apart, where they awaited the dispatches that were to be carried forward.

HOW JULIUS CÆSAR'S LETTERS WERE MAILED.

Julius Cæsar's writing materials were not ten cent a pound paper, square envelopes, violet ink, and a scratchy pen. He probably wrote upon thin tablets of wood, covered over with wax, and formed the letters with a stylus. As these tablets had no convenient gummed flap, they were bound together with a linen thread, and where the strings fastened, were sealed with wax and stamped with his signet ring. This ensured their safe and speedy delivery. Perhaps this was the origin of the franking system. The letter was then delivered to a courier who bore it rapidly to the nearest relay station, or post, where it was transferred to another courier and so on until it finally reached its destination.

THE STAR ROUTES OF THE INCAS.

When the Spanish conquerors reached Peru, they found that the Peruvian monarchs had a well established system to forward the dispatches of government. All along their postal routes small buildings were erected, at a distance of less than five miles apart, in each of which a number of couriers were stationed. These men were dressed in a peculiar livery, were all carefully trained to the work, and selected for their speed and fidelity. As the distance each had to cover was small, and as there was ample time to rest at the stations, they ran over the ground with great swiftness, and messages were carried through

the whole extent of the long routes at the rate of 150 miles a day.

POSTAL SYSTEMS IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

In the Middle Ages there were a number of these so-called systems. They were all founded, like those of Rome and the Incas, for special purposes, not for the needs of the general public. In truth, it seems that in ancient times the needs and conveniences of the general public were but little thought of. If in those days Jay Gould had uttered his famous sentiment, "The public be—," he would have been called a radical reformer, or perhaps anarchist, for the lower classes, which of course constituted "the public," were not of sufficient importance to be even spoken of in such an emphatic manner. When the world was growing more enlightened in the middle ages, cities established postal systems for the purpose of commerce, universities to enable students and their relatives at home to exchange communications, and different orders of knights as a means of extending their influence. Soon these improved conveniences were thrown open to the use of any one who could afford to pay the high rates charged. Cheap postage was not then thought of.

FRANCE AND ENGLAND COPY PERSIA AND ROME.

It is quite improbable that France and England, when in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries they established systems of mounted posts, knew that they were simply copying the Persians and Romans. But their systems were almost exactly the same, and, too, were solely for the transmission of government dis-

patches. There is a vast difference between then and now. *Then* governments were the only ones who had a right to use the postal service. *Now* the government's mail is almost lost sight of in the immense correspondence of the people.

The development of postal service is so nearly alike in all countries that it is unnecessary to treat separately of their ancient history. First, there was the establishment by the government of post routes for the transmission of official dispatches. This system was afterwards thrown open to the uses of the public. Then private individuals, seeing the profit of this business, started rival systems, to be swallowed up in the monopolization of all postal business by the government.

WHY IT BECAME A GOVERNMENT MONOPOLY.

During the infancy of the postal service, when letters were carried by both private individuals and the government, it soon became plain that competition, though the life of trade, was not the proper thing in carrying the mails, and so in the majority of countries the government monopolized this business. England, in 1637, established such a monopoly, and this has been adhered to in all her subsequent regulations of the post-office. A few years afterwards, in 1649, London, which always liked to have a finger in any pie which contained gold, attempted to set up a rival business, but the House of Commons would not allow this presumptuous city to cut rates, and suppressed the audacious competitor. In 1685, a Mr. Robert Murray of London, thought he could earn an honest penny by carrying letters and parcels between

different parts of London and its suburbs. Just as business was beginning to boom, and a dividend was about to be declared, the Duke of York, on whom the post-office revenues of England had been settled, complained of Mr. Murray's enterprise as an infringement upon his rights. The Court of King's Bench upheld the Duke, and this London post-office was annexed to the government, although it was conducted as a separate department of the general post-office until 1854. As private individuals seemed to find little honor and less profit in the post-office business, England has since had no further competition within her own borders.

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE DISCOURAGED.

It was not until 1833 that John Bull had a daily mail to Paris, while with other parts of the Continent he had but two mails a week. By this time he had come to the conclusion that it was a good thing for his subjects to send letters amongst themselves. But his rates of postage to foreign countries showed that he wished to be exclusive and not interchange very many letters with people on the continent. This policy is indicated by the rates charged, for a letter could be sent from London to a Dover address for eight pence, but if it was to be forwarded to France it would cost one shilling and twopence to take this letter from London to Dover, while for other countries the rates of postage were so excessive as to be almost prohibitory. England was not alone in discouraging foreign correspondence, for the postal service of all countries was conducted upon the same policy. But with the growth of commerce and the

great increase of emigration there came a demand upon the governments for lower rates of postage to the outside world. In 1834 the English government charged nearly one dollar to deliver a letter to a ship going to the United States. The lovelorn maiden whose John was seeking fame and fortune in the home of the free, could not send many letters at this price, for the postage on one would be almost, if not quite, a week's wages. The rates had to be lowered, and to do it the different countries of the world made many postal treaties with each other, finally culminating in the universal postal system described upon a following page.

THE FIRST POSTAL SYSTEM FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

The earliest postal system for the accommodation of the general public was established in 1516, between Berlin and Vienna, by Franz von Thurn and Taxis. Afterwards this was extended over a greater part of Germany and Italy. Fortune favored the brave, for it really was a brave undertaking to establish a postal system in those days, and the Counts of Thurn and Taxis were given a postal monopoly, which they retained until the dissolution of the German Empire in 1806.

Previous to 1524 the French postal department had labored under the delusion that it owed no duty to the people, but belonged wholly to the king and nobles. But liberal ideas were growing, and from that year any one who had the money to pay postage was allowed to use the royal post-office. England in 1635 astonished the world when it established a

running post between London and Edinburgh to go and come in six days.

A MAN WHO KNEW NOTHING ABOUT THE POST-OFFICE
REFORMED THE WHOLE SYSTEM.

It seems strange that a man not a post-office official, and one who had no practical experience in the business, should have been the greatest reformer of the service, and in fact, made possible the postal service of to-day. This was one instance at least where "the outsider knew it all" proved true. In 1837, Sir Rowland Hill published the pamphlet that has made him famous. At that period rates of postage were based upon the distance the letter was to be carried, as well as upon its weight and the number of sheets. This original man succeeded in satisfying himself, and, what was more important, the world, that the principal expense of letter carriage was in distributing and collecting, and that the cost of carrying differed so little with the distance that a uniform rate, regardless of distance, was the fairest to all concerned. He also recommended that postage be prepaid by the means of postage stamps. Of course at first this change in the rates would cause a deficiency, but he felt sure that the increased correspondence which would naturally result, as well as the savings gained by his improved methods, would more than counterbalance this. The effects bore out his theory. In one year after the adoption of his system, the number of letters carried in the United Kingdom was almost doubled. His services were rewarded with the honor of knighthood and a pension.

MODERN HISTORY OF THE POSTAL SERVICE.

The history of the postal service in the last hundred years is best told in descriptions of the workings of the different postal systems to which, after steam, the world is chiefly indebted for its marvelous material and intellectual progress. "We know now that by the supply of a cheap, rapid, and trustworthy means of communication not only have civilized people, high and low, enjoyed continuous intercourse and fellowship with absent friends, not only have works of charity been facilitated, schools enlarged, and united national feeling promoted, but in addition an incalculable stimulus has been given to trade and industry."

 CHAPTER II.

EARLY POSTAL SERVICE IN THE UNITED STATES.

Every Citizen a Letter Carrier.—The First Established System.—Virginia's Unique Method.—The First Regular Mail.—Thirty Years Later.—It was High Rates and Poor Service.—The British Government Takes a Hand.—Honest Ben puts the Postal Service on a Business Basis.—Small Beginnings Make Great Endings.—Padlocks were not Used on the Mail Bags.—The Poor Newspaper had a Hard Time.—Franklin's Successors.—The Post Office a Socialistic Institution.—Rates of Postage Fifty Years Ago.—What they Asked for in 1851.

EARLY POSTAL SERVICE IN THE UNITED STATES.—EVERY CITIZEN A LETTER CARRIER.

Prior to 1639 there was no established postal service in America, although there were a great many letter carriers. Every inhabitant, excluding the noble red man, was appointed by his neighbors and townspeople to carry letters and parcels when going upon a journey. Parton's *Life of Franklin* gives the

following interesting account of postal facilities at this early time. "Letters arriving from beyond the sea were usually delivered on board the ship into the hands of the persons to whom they were addressed, every family sending a member on board for the purpose of receiving letters. Letters not called for were taken by the captain to a coffee-house near the wharf, where they were spread out on a table waiting the coming of their owners. Persons from adjacent settlements called at the coffee-house and carried away not only their own letters, but all letters belonging to the people in the neighborhood, which they either delivered in person, or deposited at the house of the minister or magistrate, or some relative of the individual to whom the letter was addressed. Hence the custom grew of depositing at the ship coffee-house letters written in the town and destined to a place in the interior, as well as letters brought from the country and directed to an inhabitant of the town. As the settlements grew in number and magnitude, it became usual to leave letters directed to one of them, at the inn most frequented by the inhabitants of that settlement. Thus, several years before there was a post office or a post-rider in the colonies, a rude, slow, unsafe, but neighborly system of letter delivery had sprung up; and long after the establishment of a post office this neighborly method continued to be the main dependence of the people for the transportation of letters for short distances."

THE FIRST ESTABLISHED SYSTEM.

In 1639 Massachusetts established a legal system by the following decree: "It is ordered that notice

be given that Richard Fairbanks, his house in Boston, is the place appointed for all letters which are brought from beyond the seas or are to be brought thither to be left with him, and he is to take care that they are to be delivered or sent according to the directions, and he is allowed for every letter a penny, and he must answer all miscarriages through his own neglect in this kind." This was cheap postage, and probably mighty cheap service.

VIRGINIA'S UNIQUE METHOD.

Virginia appears to have been the next colony to pass laws in regard to a postal system. Her arrangement was very unique, and if the penalty was enforced, it ought to have at least ensured the delivery of letters within her borders, for the law required every planter to convey the dispatches as they arrived, to the next plantation on pain of forfeiting a hogshead of tobacco.

THE FIRST REGULAR MAIL.

A little over two hundred years ago was established the first regular mail in the colonies, the government of New York advertising a monthly mail to Boston as follows: "Those that be disposed to send letters are to bring them to the secretary's office, where, in a locked box, they shall be preserved till the messenger calls for them, all persons paying post before the bag be sealed up." It may be well to notice that there was now established cheap postage, Mr. Richard Fairbanks of Boston getting a penny for every letter, and, according to this New York advertising, prepayment was also in vogue. Unfortunately these two wise regulations came into disuse, and about 150

years afterwards were among the reforms which were so clamorously demanded.

THIRTY YEARS LATER.

The next thirty years must have seen an immense increase in the mail business of the colonies, for in 1702 the Boston News-Letter published the following order, showing that the monthly mail referred to before was to be changed to a fortnightly one: "By order of the Postmaster General of North America. These are to give notice that on Monday night, the 6th of December, the western post between Boston and New York sets out once a fortnight." Probably some of the good old people of Massachusetts thought that this innovation could not be kept up, for there surely would not be enough letters to pay the expense of the messengers going with the mails, who received three pence a mile.

IT WAS HIGH RATES AND POOR SERVICE.

In 1683 there was a weekly mail from Philadelphia to Maryland, the postage being six pence for each letter. As the worthy people who were settling this new country began to have more time for letter writing, other postal routes and postal systems were soon established. The New Hampshire colony established one in 1693, and the other colonies soon adopted regulations for postal service. Before 1760 mail was forwarded east of Portsmouth, N. H., only when a sufficient number of letters had been received to pay expenses—a sort of "go as you please" service.

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TAKES A HAND.

In 1660 the British government sought to regulate,

by an act of parliament, postal communication in the colonies, but these efforts seemed to have had but little effect until 1692, when Virginia accepted for herself the appointment of Thomas Neale to take charge of the postal business of the colonies. Thomas could not have been a very energetic sort of person, for no post-office was established in that colony until forty years after his appointment. Great Britain was not getting rich out of the postal revenue she derived from the colonies, as she received no profit from that business until 1753. In addition to the high rates of postage and irregularity of the mails, the post riders and postmasters of early times were rather untrustworthy. They evidently ran the mails to suit themselves, for Andrew Bradford, who was postmaster of Philadelphia, kept Benjamin Franklin's paper, "The Philadelphia Gazette," out of the mails in order that his own paper, "The Mercury," might obtain the most business. If Andrew had published a paper in New York City, A. D. 1889, he would undoubtedly have had "the biggest circulation in America."

HONEST BEN PUTS THE POSTAL SERVICE ON A BUSINESS
BASIS.

Benjamin Franklin seems to have differed from the average "Jack of all trades," for he was master of all that he undertook. In 1737 he was appointed postmaster of Philadelphia. He managed this office so well that in 1753 the Crown appointed him Deputy Postmaster General of the colonies. He changed the hit or miss style of the postal service to one organized upon business ideas, and ran the post-office

department in such a way as to make a profit for Great Britain. But honest Ben was too patriotic to hold such a prominent position in the service of His Majesty at that period, and soon made himself obnoxious on account of his connection with a petition for the removal of the governor of Massachusetts, and for this reason was dismissed from the service January 31, 1774. The people of the colonies thought that they could manage their postal business themselves, and combined in making arrangements for carrying their own mail without the assistance of Great Britain. They accordingly appointed Franklin post-master general in 1775 with a salary of one thousand dollars per year.

“SMALL BEGINNINGS MAKE GREAT ENDINGS.”

One almost needs a microscope to find the postal department in the days of the Revolution. Massachusetts had fourteen post-offices, New Hampshire one, and a few offices were scattered among the other colonies. Then the average day's journey of a letter was between thirty and fifty miles, and it was not until 1792 that the idea of sending a letter at the marvelous speed of one hundred miles a day was thought of.

In 1791 there were but six post-offices in New Jersey, which state by the way, could hardly be considered one of the United States, for it levied a tax upon all passengers and mails carried across its borders going to and from Philadelphia and New York. The gross receipts from these six post offices for one year were \$530.00. Such were the small beginnings of our postal service.

Our ancestors had every reason to be badly frightened at the national debt caused by the Revolution; but each year we now expend nearly as large a sum in carrying our letters and newspapers. From such a small start our postal system has grown to its present immense proportions, and the end is not yet.

In New York city alone more letters are delivered each day than were distributed in the whole United States in one year at the time of Franklin's administration.

When the British decided that it was best for them to leave New York, there were three mails a week to Boston in the summer time and two in the winter; and it was rarely that a pair of saddle bags was not large enough to hold one of these tri-weekly mails.

The number of post-offices in 1776 was 28; now, in 1889, there are nearly 60,000. The postage upon a letter from New York to Savannah was exactly eighteen times as much as will now send one far beyond the Rocky Mountains into regions that were one vast wilderness a hundred years ago, and of which our ancestors had never even heard.

PADLOCKS WERE NOT USED ON THE MAIL BAGS.

The post riders of the eighteenth century had a free and easy way of taking care of the mails. Some of them made their long rides seem short by knitting mittens and stockings while they jogged slowly along, and others found pleasant company in the thoughts and writings contained in the letters and packages entrusted to their care. Many government officials and business men found it necessary to use a cipher

in their correspondence. Madison in a letter to Jefferson, dated October 17, 1784, wrote, "My two letters, neither of which were in cipher, were written, as will be all future ones, under the same conditions, in the expectation of their being read by the postmaster."

THE POOR NEWSPAPER HAD A HARD TIME.

In framing the early postal laws no one seemed to think that the newspaper was entitled to any consideration, for no provision was made for postage upon these pieces of printed paper, which now form such an important element in our life.

The postmaster's powers then equalled those of the Czar of all the Russias, as far as mailing newspapers was concerned; for they could either send papers through the mails free of postage, or decline to take them upon any terms, just as they chose. It was quite natural that many of these worthy gentlemen saw that here was a grand chance to turn an honest penny, and the publication of newspapers became almost an exclusive right of postmasters. When the postmaster was removed his paper naturally fell into one of two conditions, neither of which benefitted him particularly,—it was either sold to the new postmaster, or else died a natural death.

In 1790, Postmaster General Samuel Osgood, with true New England thrift, reported to Congress that "Newspapers which hitherto passed free of postage circulated extensively through the post-offices, and one or two cents on them would probably amount to as much as the expense of transporting the mails." This report led to the following law: "Newspapers

shall be carried in a separate bag from letters, and charged one cent for 100 miles—one and one-half cent for greater distances." From that time on newspapers seem to have been a considerable cause of trouble to the post office department, judging from the frequent changes in rates of postage, and the large space devoted to them in the postal laws and rulings.

FRANKLIN'S SUCCESSORS.

When Franklin was appointed postmaster general his brain could do better service for his country than to manage the few post offices and look after the handful of employees, and in November, 1776, his son-in-law was appointed as his successor. He was succeeded by Ebenezer Hazard, who held the office until the adoption of the Federal Constitution, in 1789. This constitution conferred upon Congress the exclusive control of the postal matter for all the states, and as soon as it was adopted, Congress proceeded to organize the post-office department.

RATES OF POSTAGE FIFTY YEARS AGO.

Previous to 1854 the sender of a letter must have counted well the cost before finally entrusting it to the hands of the mail carrier. Postage on a single letter for 30 miles was $6\frac{1}{4}$ cents. Over 30 and under 80, 10 cents; over 80 and under 150, $12\frac{1}{2}$ cents; over 150 and under 400, $18\frac{3}{4}$ cents, and over 400, 25 cents. Every extra enclosure doubled these rates, while if a letter weighed over an ounce the rates were multiplied by four. Previous to the reduction of rates in 1845, postage on a very large proportion of the letters sent from seaboard cities as far west as Indiana, was a

dollar and over. When in that year the rates were reduced about 50 per cent., the birds of evil omen, who were always seeking some chance of prophesying disaster, predicted that this measure would bankrupt the country. That in less than forty years a small green stamp, which cost but two cents, would carry a letter weighing an ounce across this continent, shows most clearly that this reduction was just what was needed. It is an accepted truth that decreasing the price of anything increases its use, and this is well proven by comparison of our present postal system and that of fifty years ago.

WHAT THEY ASKED FOR IN 1851.

Now when the cry is for penny postage, it is interesting to look back forty years, and see what reformers of those days asked for, and, too, how far their demands have been met. A forcible writer of that day, in advocating postal reform, in an article in Harper's magazine, asked for seven improvements and changes, as follows :

1. " Letter postage should be reduced to a uniform rate of two cents prepaid." Then the rates were three, five, six, and ten cents, according to distance, with optional prepayment of postage.

2. " Ocean postage is enormous and burdensome, and should be reduced to a low rate. The greater portion of the letters are from persons in poor circumstances, and to tax them 24 or 29 cents for a single letter is cruel. To send a letter and receive an answer will cost a servant girl half a week's wages, and a poor man in the country will have to work a

day to earn the value of the postage of a letter to and from his friends in Europe."

3. "Next in reduction to inland and ocean postage is the free delivery of mailed letters in all large towns and cities. They are now conveyed to the post-office free of charge and the next step necessary is to cause them to be delivered without any addition to the postage."

4. "The franking privilege should be wholly abolished."

5. "What is most complained of by the people is the complicated and burdensome tax on newspapers and other printed matter. The rates are so complicated that not one postmaster in twenty can tell what postage should be charged upon newspapers. Again, the rates are enormous. The Journal of Commerce is charged to San Francisco, if not prepaid, thirty cents."

6. "Another reform which should be made is the payment of postage entirely by stamps."

7. "There is one more improvement which I would recommend, and that is the establishment of a money order office."

Of these seven recommendations, all but that in regard to franking have been adopted, and an enormous increase in business and efficiency has been the result. It is to be hoped that the writer of that article calling so vigorously for postal reform, lived to see the carrying out of his recommendations. Had he prophesied that they would come, it might well be said that he was blessed with a look into the future. At any rate, he knew what was wanted, worked to obtain it, and, better yet, succeeded.

THE POST OFFICE A SOCIALISTIC INSTITUTION.

Justice Schwab, and his band of anarchists, will probably laugh at the idea that the post-office system of the United States is purely a Socialistic Institution, but this is true in one sense, at least. The post-office is not, and ought not to be, run for the purpose of making money. No short haul or long haul confusion has made it necessary to appoint a commission to see that the rich man gets lower postage rates than his poorer neighbor. Any one who has enough coin of the country to buy a two cent stamp can send a letter as quickly and cheaply as the money king whose bills for correspondence may run up in the thousands each year.

The idea which has always dominated the postal regulations of the United States is, that the post-office revenue should not exceed its expenditures; and that this department of the government should not be a money-making concern. It is established for the benefit of the people, and the people are to pay for it solely according to the use which they make of it.

 CHAPTER III.

PAST AND PRESENT OF THE POSTAGE STAMP.

Who made the first Postage Stamp—Spain goes into the Postage Stamp Business—Sardinia was next—The First General Use of Postage Stamps.—The Introduction of Postal Cards.—The Grand Procession.—Why Brazil Used Tobacco Stamps.—The Russian Bear Begins to use Postage Stamps.—Postage Stamps in the United States.—Postmaster's, Stamps.—The Largest Postage Stamp in the World.—The Beautiful Stamps of France.—Here and There among the Stamps.—Fortunes Paid for Postage Stamps.

WHO MADE THE FIRST POSTAGE STAMP.

Like many other things of daily use which once

were not and now are, postage stamps have become such a familiar object that but few people ask, whence? But the history of their origin is very interesting.

In the reign of Louis 14th of France, M. De Velay, who did letter carrying for a consideration, placed boxes at the corners of the streets for the reception of letters wrapped in envelopes, with slips of paper tied around them, bearing the inscription, "Postpaid the——day of——1653." These slips were sold for a small sum at the palace, at the turn tables of convents, and by the porters of colleges. M. De Velay would have been called a "hustler" had his birth been delayed some three hundred years; for he soon extended his business to the printing of letter sheets with blank forms applicable to ordinary business among the inhabitants of large towns, leaving spaces to be filled in with such special matter as might best suit the writer's object. He evidently was ahead of his age, for these slips and forms were not largely used, and his business soon died out.

In 1758 M. De Chamouset established a post system in Paris, the charge for postage being prepaid by stamps similar to those now in use. The government, however, seeing that there was money in it released him from the care of this business, although it compensated him for the loss of income with an annual pension of twenty thousand francs. But when the post came into the hands of the government, as the use of stamps did not necessitate enough red tape to keep the officials busy, the stamps soon fell into "innocuous desuetude," and were forgotten.

SPAIN GOES INTO THE POSTAGE STAMP BUSINESS.

After France, Spain was the next country to use postage stamps, their use being authorized by a royal decree of December 7, 1716. This allowed the secretaries to the Crown Prince, etc., etc, to have the privilege of impressing in ink upon letters addressed to other authorities a seal bearing the royal arms of Castile and Leon, which would pass their letters free. It is probable that some of the secretaries to the Crown, etc., etc., used this official stamp to save postage on letters to their sweethearts and friends; for about eighty years later notice was given that the stamps mentioned in the decree of 1716 were to be used only for letters concerning public business. These official stamps remained in use until the beginning of the present century.

SARDINIA WAS NEXT.

November 7, 1818, Sardinia issued some postal paper of three values, which could be procured at post-offices and from tobacco dealers who received a commission upon their sales. This paper was but little used, and was withdrawn in 1836. One very probable reason why it did not find more favor with the people of Titian and the great masters was its lack of beauty. A boy, whose only clothing was a tin horn, riding upon a fiery mustang, did not make a very artistic postage stamp.

THE FIRST GENERAL USE OF POSTAGE STAMPS.

To Sir Rowland Hill are we indebted for the prepayment of letters by means of postage stamps. Among his other reforms he advocated most strenuously the prepayment of postage, and suggested that

the difficulties attending this might be obviated by using a bit of paper just long enough to bear the stamp, and covered at the back with a glutinous wash, which by applying a little moisture might be attached to the back of the letter. Of course, his suggestion was opposed. Happily a stream of petitions poured into parliament, urging this reform, and May 6, 1840, it was adopted.

As soon as postage stamps were decided upon the government offered a prize of five hundred pounds for the best design and plan for the stamp, stating that the requirements were simplicity and facility in working, in combination with such precautions as should prove effectual against forgery. Thousands of people wanted the five hundred pounds, but Heath of London took the prize with a small but handsome design which was used until quite recently, the only change for years being in the color. There was also a prize offered for the best design for a stamped envelope. This was won by Mulready, R. A., with a peculiar allegorical design, representing England sending out her winged letter angels, and thus drawing the commerce of the world. By the side of the stamped envelopes and postage stamps of to-day this looks like a work of antediluvian days. "Honor to whom honor is due," and to England and Sir Rowland Hill should be given the honor of creating the postage stamp, which is now used by all civilized countries. The stamps of Great Britain are printed at Somerset House, London.

THE INTRODUCTION OF POSTAL CARDS.

In 1870 postal cards were introduced into England.

The design was very handsome, consisting of the Queen's head in a circle with ornaments, etc., and a broad label in the lower margin inscribed, "half penny," the whole forming a rectangle. The main inscription which occupied the principal portion of the card to the left of the same was, "Post Card. The address only to be written on this side. To—————."

These cards were 4 and 1-4 inches long by 3 and 1-2 inches broad.

THE GRAND PROCESSION.

England stands at the head of the column of nations, in the adoption of postage stamps. She was followed by some of the Swiss Cantons in 1843, Brazil in 1843, Russia in 1845, United States in 1847, France in 1848, Schleswig Holstein in 1848, Tuscany in 1849, Belgium in 1849, and Spain in 1850, until the use of the postage stamp became general throughout the world.

WHY BRAZIL USED TOBACCO STAMPS.

Brazil, though separated from England by the Atlantic Ocean, was the second to follow her example in the adoption of postage stamps, and a decree of November 29, 1842, ordered their creation. It was the design of the head of the postal department to reproduce, as in England, the features of the sovereign, but the director of the mint had a very highly developed bump of reverence, and the idea of reproducing his emperor's features upon a common postage stamp shocked him so much that he made representations to that effect in a letter dated February 13, 1843. His delicate sensibilities were respected, and the first stamps of Brazil closely re-

sembled parts of our tobacco stamps, having a large figure upon an oval of intricate engraving. Time conquers everything, even reverence for kings, and at present the portrait of his Brazilian majesty beams upon his subjects from beautiful stamps printed in two colors.

THE RUSSIAN BEAR BEGINS TO USE POSTAGE STAMPS.

Russia introduced the use of postal envelopes in 1845. These bore the imperial arms in a circle, and were of four values only. Adhesive postage stamps were first used in Russia in 1857, and have passed through several series. The issue of 1864 was very beautiful, combining elegance and simplicity in a marvelous manner. The Russian provinces of Finland, Livonia and Poland, by royal favor, were permitted to issue stamps, but they were much inferior in elaborate execution to those of the empire. The Polish stamps are now obsolete, having been superseded by those of Russia proper.

POSTAGE STAMPS IN THE UNITED STATES.

Congress, in 1845, authorized the use of postage stamps, but it was not until 1847 that the payment of postage in cash, sometimes by the sender and sometimes by the receiver of the letter, was superseded by postage stamps. Third Assistant Postmaster General Hazen gives this short history of the use of postage stamps in the United States :

“In 1847 the first stamps were issued. They were of the denominations of five and ten cents. The five-cent stamp had a picture of Ben Franklin and the ten-cent stamp the head of Washington as the principal figure in the design. Those heads have

continued to adorn the postage stamps of our country from that day to this. The stamps first issued were a little larger than those now in use. In 1851 the carrier system was introduced in all large cities, and stamps of a peculiar design, costing one cent each and known as carriers' stamps, were issued for the purpose of providing prepaid delivery. In that year the letter postage was reduced to three cents, and the old brick dust red three-cent stamp came in. At the same time the issue was enlarged to eight stamps, the largest denomination being ninety cents. The portrait of Jefferson was introduced on the five-cent stamp, but the other seven bore the heads of Washington and Franklin in different designs. These stamps were the most popular ever issued by the department. They remained in use for ten years.

“The new three-cent stamp issued in 1861 was of a light red. It was almost as popular as its predecessor. At that time the three-cent stamp was the popular stamp or the one most in use, and not the two-cent stamp as now. The light red three-cent stamp remained in use until 1869, when there was a decided innovation in the designs of the entire issue. The new stamps were square instead of oblong, and many of them were printed in two colors, the central design being in one tone and the border in another. The principal figure in each design was in almost every instance a representation of some mode of carrying the mails instead of the head of some departed statesman. The three-cent stamp was printed in blue, and the principal figure in the design was a locomotive. That issue of stamps lasted ten months. The

people clamored so against them that in 1870 a return was made to the old designs, which were printed, however, in different colors. The three-cent stamp was then made green with the head of Washington in the center of the design. That stamp is of such recent date that its design is familiar to every one. A great many of them were stored away in old cash boxes and stamp boxes, and occasionally now, we find them on letters received at this office."

The green three-cent stamp which was adopted in 1870 continued in use longer than any of its predecessors. It was used until October 1, 1883, and it might have continued in vogue much longer had not Congress reduced the rate of letter postage to two cents. Under the new law a brown two-cent stamp was issued. It continued in use until 1887, when its color was changed to the objectionable green.

POSTMASTERS' STAMPS.

Among the rarest American stamps are some which were not issued by the government. When Congress, in 1845, authorized the use of stamps, it neglected to make such provision as warranted the postal authorities in their estimation in the issue of stamps. During the period of two years preceding the issue of government stamps the principal cities of the United States issued what were known as postmasters' stamps. They were intended for the convenience of business men who desired to mail letters after the closing of the post-office, for the post-office did not remain in operation all night in the primitive days of the postal service. These stamps were issued by postmasters at New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Bal-

timore, St. Louis, Providence, Alexandria and a great many other places. Some of these stamps were merely slips of paper bearing the signatures of the postmasters. Collectors value the Baltimore stamp which is of this character, at \$200. A stamp which was issued by the postmaster of New Haven is worth on an original-used envelope \$300 and more. A postage stamp issued by the Milbury postmaster, which was of elaborate design for those days, and bore the head of Washington, brings easily \$300 to \$500.

THE LARGEST POSTAGE STAMP IN THE WORLD.

While the United States has received the congratulations of several foreign governments upon the beauty of workmanship of her stamps, they being prominent in delicacy of engraving and elegance of design and general beauty, she has also the honor of having used the largest stamps for postal purposes in the world. These were the periodical stamps, which were used for newspapers carried outside the mails. They differed from the other stamps in being surface printed from steel plates, and not fine line engravings. The three values, five, ten and twenty-five cents, bore respectively, portraits of Washington, Franklin and Lincoln. Though large they had but a short life, being issued October 6, 1865, and withdrawn in February, 1869. They were used only in Chicago and Milwaukee.

THE BEAUTIFUL STAMPS OF FRANCE.

The postage stamps of France naturally followed her political changes. Their first permanent introduction in that country was in 1848, when the re-

public issued a series which bore the impress of the French love of the beautiful. The central device of this stamp was a head of the Goddess of Liberty. Soon after, in the presidency, the stamps bore the profile of Louis Napoleon, which shows that worthy to have been a most consummate politician, for his elegant features upon the postage stamp did much to prepare the people for his later appearance as an emperor. In following years under the Empire, new stamps were issued representing his imperial majesty crowned with the laurel of the Cæsars. When France tired of the magnificence of the emperors and overthrew the throne a new set of stamps was issued very similar to those of the republic of 1848. During the siege of Paris they were issued from the provisional capital of Bordeaux.

The postage stamps now used in France must have the same effect upon Anthony Comstock, Secretary of the Society for the Prevention of Vice, as a red rag waved before a bull; and it seems strange that he has not taken steps to prevent letters from France coming into this country.

All the stamps of France, as well as those of her colonies, and Greece, are made at the Hotel Des Monnaies, or Mint. The sheets upon which they are printed are subjected to four successive operations, rendering them proof against forgery by the transferring process. After printing, gumming, and perforating, the stamps are carefully inspected by government officials who destroy all imperfect ones, and forward the balance to the post-office department.

HERE AND THERE AMONG THE STAMPS.

It would take a volume to describe all the postage stamps of the world, for there have been thousands of different stamps issued by hundreds of different countries ; but brief mention of the distinctive character of some of the more interesting stamps cannot fail to be interesting.

After the French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine were annexed to Prussia that government instead of forcing the people to use Prussian stamps, issued a series specially for these provinces. They were printed upon tinted paper with a simple design, consisting of a numeral value, with the inscription " Postes Centime."

Belgium introduced postage stamps in July, 1849, and familiarized the people with the features of the king by using his bust as the principal part of the design. All the succeeding issues of Belgium stamps bore either the national arms or a portrait of the sovereign.

Postage stamps were introduced into Spain in 1850, and were sold by tobacco dealers, who received a commission of 3 per cent. upon their sales. The design was usually a portrait of the reigning sovereign, and judging by the portraits, the empress certainly was not beautiful.

Mexico, with all her revolutions, was the first country in Central America to use postage stamps. One series bore the portrait of Hidalgo, the first hero of the independence ; another, the Mexican eagle and cactus ; another, the portrait of Emperor Maximilian. The present issue is quite similar to the early stamps

of Brazil, being a large numeral upon an elaborately engraved background.

The stamps of Nevis in the West Indian Islands are a pleasing deviation from the general practice of printing the portraits of sovereigns or the imperial arms. The stamps bear an emblematical device, representing the Goddess of Health, Hygeia, giving the water of a mineral spring to a sick person. Here is a valuable hint to some enterprising proprietary medicine house in this country. Just think of the amount of good that would be done if every United States stamp bore this device, "To strengthen the nerves use Paine's Celery Compound," or, "In the spring take Kidney-Wort."

British Guiana, which adopted postage stamps in 1850, used a handsome design of a full rigged ship for the principal device. The stamps of Chili are the only ones bearing the portrait of Columbus.

Cashmere, Turkey and Japan furnish stamps that to an American strongly resemble the complex design traced by a fly in his wanderings after a bath in an ink well. As the old lady said, "The strongest evidence of the intelligence of these people is that they can read their own language."

Asiatic and African nations are well represented in the postage stamp collections of to-day. The Cape of Good Hope is the only country which thought something better than the square or rectangular shape could be found. Her early issues were triangular and bore as a device an emblematic figure of Hope.

The stamps of Egypt with pictures of pyramids and sphinxes, those of Nicaragua and Salvador with

their volcanoes, of Mauritius with their emblematic figure of commerce, and those of West Australia with the swan, lend the charm of variety and novelty to the postage stamps of the world.

Canada introduced postage stamps in 1851, Nova Scotia in 1856, New Brunswick in 1856, Newfoundland in 1859, Prince Edward Island in 1861, British Columbia in 1860. Most of the early issues of these provinces were printed in the United States. In 1867, Her Majesty's Proclamation announced the formation of the Dominion of Canada, and the post-office department passed into the hands of one official, with a single set of postage stamps prepared by the British American Bank Note Company of Montreal.

When the Confederate States of America were instituted they found themselves without postage stamps, except those of the United States, which were scattered throughout the different post-offices in the South, and as these, of course, would not carry a letter under that government, and no regular series had yet been devised, the postmasters of New Orleans, Nashville, Baton Rouge, Mobile, Memphis, and other southern states, issued stamps on their own responsibility. These and the stamps afterwards authorized by the confederate government have become historical, although as works of art they were lamentable failures. The first series of three values, two, five and ten cents, were made in Richmond, and were furnished until 1863, when they were replaced by a five cent stamp prepared in England, and by two, ten and twenty cent stamps made in Columbia, S. C.

Postage stamps have almost an infinite variety of designs, and their collection is a captivating amusement with boys, and a pleasing recreation among older persons. They have surely done as much in uniting closer together the bond of human brotherhood, as any one thing, and not only the postal officials who have found them a great convenience in facilitating the work of their department, but the whole world, owes the little postage stamp a debt of gratitude.

FORTUNES PAID FOR OLD POSTAGE STAMPS.

As a contribution to the history of human folly, the prices which a parcel of old postage stamps has just realized at a London auction are not unworthy of notice. The collection consisted of 286 "lots," the most valuable being a set of rare British Guiana labels, and for these the bids ran to figures which must seem to any one not bitten with the mania, little less than monstrous. A "blue four cent" of 1856 excited eager competition, and was finally knocked down to a dealer for \$180. This specimen, however, had been used, so that when a stamp "much finer," and without the defacing marks of the sorter on its surface, was put up, there was nothing left but for the buyer of the \$180 specimen to acquire it at \$65 advance. After this a strip of four one cent magentas, issued in 1851, on the original envelope, from the same colony, at \$35; four of the one cent 1853 issue at \$5 each, and a pair of four cent magentas, thirty three years old, at \$60, are barely worth notice, though their prices are so much in advance of what the first owner paid for them over the post-office

counter in Georgetown. Yet a book of 4,000 old issues of English stamps—postage, revenue, law, bill, railway, and receipt,—brought less than \$40, and a thousand Mexican ones only \$30, while a collection, of 380 Russian local stamps seem to the uninitiated, to be simply given away at \$20. We may, however, take it that this collection, large as it is, did not, even if genuine, contain any of the rarer ones. For, as the student of M. Koprowski's volume must be aware, some Russian stamps are so scarce as to cause the most ardent collector many a heartache in his futile endeavors to obtain a specimen which will pass the narrow scrutiny of the expert. These and all other high priced stamps are forged wholesale, and with such ingenuity that only the experienced connoisseur can detect the knaveries. The presence of such impostors in the company of honest specimens is the reason why the amateur at sales finds, to his amazement, a wretched square inch of gummed paper going for a thousand times its weight in gold, while he can secure an album containing it, and a host of similar rarities, almost at his own terms. The collection of M. Philippe de Ferrari is said to contain a quarter of a million specimens, and to be worth almost as many half eagles. Mr. Philbrick is understood to have sold this wealthy Parisian virtuoso one collection for \$50,000, while Sir Daniel Cooper, an Australian collector, wisely transferred to the same gentleman the fruits of sixteen years' hoarding for \$15,000. Mr. Burnett's albums are currently reported to have brought something like \$100,000, and it is nothing uncommon to dispose of a respectable, but by no

means remarkable, set of stamps for \$2,000, \$3,000 or \$5,000. The collection made by the late Duchess de Galliera is affirmed to have cost, up to the year 1883, in acquisition and arrangement not less than \$250,000, and the value of the 3,000 volumes in which it was contained has since that date been put at \$60,000 more. Yet it is believed that both in England and on the Continent there are public and private hoards very little inferior to it in interest and value. At the Paris Mint there is a remarkable collection, and that of the Admiralty is famous throughout the world, while the Rothschild collection in Paris is so costly that the owner, with the true jealousy of the collector, reserves the pages containing his rarest specimens for the delectation of special friends.

The prices given at the recent sale are said to be the highest ever paid for single stamps. We doubt whether this is correct. The 15 and 30 cent Reunion stamps bring \$500; the New Brunswick 5 cent stamp, with the head of O'Connell, is rarely parted with under \$150. The set of four 1852 Hawaiian stamps are valued at \$1,500, and the four British Guiana of 1850 are worth \$375. Then there is the 1847 Mauritius stamp, printed from a wood block—in two issues—one worth a penny and the other twopence, when first issued, and these are so seldom met with nowadays that we believe \$500 has been paid for one of them. But the rarest of all literature of this sort is the Mulready wrapper on India paper, issued in 1840. Of these there are said to be only six or seven in existence, although \$125,000 worth were issued, and the last which changed hands brought, if our memory is not at fault, the ridiculous price of \$400.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE.

The First Travelling Post Office.—A Gigantic Machine.—Its Birth.—The First Railway Post Office.—Its Rapid Growth.—Palace Postal Cars.—A Sample Run.—Duties of the Clerks.—The Paper Jerker and the Fakir.—The Catcher.—The Fast Mail Express.—The Dangers of a Railway Postal Clerk's Life.—Importance of Permanency.—Trouble with the Railroads.—The General Superintendents.

THE FIRST TRAVELLING POST OFFICE.

The first we hear of a travelling post-office, which is a name now often given postal cars, was in a memorial address to congress in November, 1776, by Ebenezer Hazard, Postmaster General, where he mentioned that on account of the many and almost constant removals of the Continental army, he had to undergo great expense and fatigues, and that "having to pay an exorbitant price for every necessary of life, and having been obliged, for want of a horse, which could not be procured, to follow the army on foot."

A GIGANTIC MACHINE.

Although Ex-Postmaster General Thomas L. James has written an admirable article on the Railway Mail Service, which was published in one of our leading magazines, and other writers have given the public similar articles, there is still a certain mystery about this valuable department of our postal service which seems to make those who do their postal work upon the rail a little more than ordinary men. Nor is this to be wondered at. An express train rushes into the depot; the postal car with its barred windows and heavy doors looks like a traveling bank, but the words, "United States Railway Post Office," painted

in large letters on the side show what it is ; inside are seen coatless men working for dear life, with piles of mail bags and pouches, heaps of letters and papers, and racks of pigeon holes ; a stop of a few minutes ; mail bags hastily thrown off ; others taken in ; a few short, quick puffs of the locomotive and the express train rushes out with the railway postal clerks working harder than ever. Even the post-office clerks know but little more than this about that branch of the service which is of the greatest advantage to every man, woman and child in the United States. William Lewins aptly says of the railway mail system, " It is like a gigantic machine, one part dependent upon another, and all alike dependent upon the motive power of the different contracting parties."

ITS BIRTH.

England, with her small extent of thickly settled country, was able to first put in operation a railway postal service, and the experiment was made in January, 1838, between London and Birmingham. This was so successful that one person made the remark, " By means of the extra railway facilities letters now pass along this line (London and Birmingham), in a space of time so inconceivably quick that some time must elapse before our ideas become accustomed to such a rapid mode of intercourse."

It was some two score years after its adoption in England before the United States postal department took any steps to avail itself of this great improvement. In 1860 an arrangement was made with the railroads to run a mail train from New York to Boston by the way of Hartford and Springfield, so

that the southern mails should be immediately transferred from New York instead of laying over until the following day, as they had done heretofore. This may be regarded as the birth of the postal railway service of this country. A few like arrangements were made with other railroads, so that mail trains were run between New York and Washington, although, of course, the only advantage of these mail trains was the quick transfer of mail matter from one place to another. The travelling post-office, where mails are assorted when going at the rate of fifty miles an hour, had not yet come.

THE FIRST RAILWAY POST OFFICE.

Mr. W. A. Davis, one of the St. Joseph, Missouri, post-office force, has the honor of making the first distribution and assortment of mails while they were in transit. In 1862 the thought occurred to him that if the mail could be assorted on the cars between Quincy and St. Joseph it would save the overland mail considerable valuable time. The department allowed him to carry out this idea, paying him for the work which he did. But to Col. George B. Armstrong, who was afterwards the first General Superintendent of the Railway Mail Service, is due the honor of establishing the postal cars. The first car sent out upon his suggestion left Chicago for Clinton, Iowa, August 28, 1864. At that time Col. Armstrong was Assistant Postmaster at Chicago, and his plan of running the post-office cars on the principal railroads, with a force of clerks to make up the mails for offices at the end of and along the routes, was tested in this trip under the following order from Postmaster

General Blair. "Test by actual experiment upon such railroad route or routes as you may select at Chicago, the plans proposed by you for simplifying the mail service." Although Mr. Davis was undoubtedly the person who first suggested the idea of railway post-offices, yet to Col. Armstrong belongs the gratitude and credit of establishing this important branch, which, starting in such a humble way but a quarter of a century ago, now employs over five thousand men, extends to every part of the country, controls the contracting for mail service upon 140,000 miles of railroad and 6,000 miles of steamboat routes, and expends about \$20,000,000 annually.

ITS RAPID GROWTH.

In 1864 a special agent of the department visited the presidents of the several railroads, which run between Washington and New York, to find out what explanation they could give of the irregular mail service between those points. The officers evinced both a ready willingness to admit the existence of good cause for complaint, and the desirability of remedying the trouble, and also expressed themselves as desirous of doing whatever was in their power to secure more correct and rapid mail service. Postal cars were accordingly tried on the road between New York and Washington, and were so successful that within a few months similar cars were run between Chicago and Davenport, Chicago and Burlington, and Galesburg and Quincy. It was not long after the inauguration of this service before post-office cars were placed upon all the principal lines leading out of Chicago and between New York, Albany and Buffalo.

PALACE POSTAL CARS.

The first travelling post-office which run between Chicago and Clinton was built by the railroad company under the supervision of Mr. Zevely, who was Col. Armstrong's right hand man in instituting this service. The interior arrangement was elaborate and elegant for that age, but in comparison with the postal cars of the present day it was crude and primitive. Although railroad companies build and own the cars, the post office department controls them. Different railroads have vied with each other in getting out elegant and convenient cars, some being almost equal in their fittings to the drawing room cars of the vestibule trains. On the western roads especially, no expense is spared to gain all the conveniences. The cars for long routes in addition to their ingeniously contrived work rooms, contain bed room, parlor and dining room. But the majority of the cars are not like "my lady's boudoir." They are built for hard and constant work, and the wear and tear of railroad speed soon leaves the marks of the service they have done for their country.

A SAMPLE RUN.

While the mail trains of the great trunk lines have several postal cars carrying between fourteen and fifteen hundred packages of letters, a hundred in a package, to say nothing of the sacks of newspapers, and employ a large crew of men, a better understanding of the work of the mail clerk can be gained from taking a trip on a train having but one postal car. The general plan on the larger trains is the same as that on the trip we are about taking. We will find the

crew, which usually consists of a head clerk, with two assistants, waiting in the room which is set apart for their use at the city post-office. It is nearly time for the train to start; the head clerk has receipted to the register clerk of the post-office for the registered letters and packages going to points upon his route and connecting lines beyond, and put them under lock and key in his register pouch; the cry of the mail despatcher—"All aboard," is heard, and the clerks with their traps, consisting of postal guides, railway maps, tags and labels for pouches, distribution sacks, working clothes, lunch baskets, etc., etc., leap into the mail wagon, which is filled to overflowing with brass bound leather bags, and are driven rapidly away to the depot; their travelling post-office is waiting, and the mail wagon is backed up to the door, the bags, pouches and boxes are quickly thrown in; now for hard work, expert, rapid and efficient.

DUTIES OF THE CLERKS.

The through mail bags and pouches which contain mail going to the end of the route are piled up in the through mail room, while those containing matter which is to be distributed along the road are piled up in the working room in the forward and middle part of the car. The head clerk, who distributes the through letter mail, unlocks and empties upon the floor, "dumps up," in front of a letter case, containing several hundred pigeon holes, the six or seven thousand letters which a pouch holds. These letters are all tied up in packages of about one hundred each. Picking up an armful of the packages and placing them on the shelf in front of the letter

case he rapidly cuts the strings and places the letters in their proper pigeon holes, with amazing dexterity. While the head clerk is distributing the through letter mail, one of his assistants is taking care of the way mail, which is to be delivered at different points along the route, in a similar manner. As each of the large post offices is a distributing office for adjacent small ones, the railway clerks not only make up direct packages for the different post-offices on their routes, but also packages for lines which connect with their route at the large offices. The third clerk, who in the practical language of the postal car is called a paper jerker, distributes the newspaper mail in another part of the car. He throws his bulky packages at and into labeled boxes in front of him. It is rarely that he jerks a paper into a wrong place.

THE PAPER JERKER AND THE FAKIR.

The postal clerks acquire a marvellous accuracy of aim which sometimes serves them well outside of their business. The following tells how a paper jerker increased his salary one day:

On a side lot near the Forepaugh grounds on North Broad street there was a fakir yesterday, says a Philadelphia paper, whose outfit consisted of the stake and ring game. The simple and enticing amusement is played as follows: The stake is placed in the ground at a certain angle, which leads the uninitiated to believe that it is easy to throw the five-inch rings over it, whereas the feat is almost impossible. The fakir had a crowd around him and was raking in the dimes—three “tries” for ten cents—when a black-mustached, middle-sized man walked

up and said he'd bet a dollar he could put three rings out of five over the stake.

The fakir winked at the crowd and took the man up. The black-mustached stranger threw five rings rapidly one after another, and, as three of them went over the stake, the thrower was in 80 cents. They doubled bets, and the stranger won again. Then they bet \$10 even that nine out of the first ten thrown could not be put over the stake. The whole ten settled safely, and the fakir, as he handed \$10 in silver over, said :

“I'm broke ; what's your business ?”

“I'm a ‘paper jerker’ on a postal car,” said the ring thrower. “I don't do anything but fling papers all day long into the mouths of fifty sacks.”

THE CATCHER.

The head clerk and his assistant have their mail nearly distributed and put into different pigeon holes for delivery at the proper station, when a bang on the door announces the arrival of the train at a large town, and in comes more mail matter, which will keep them out of mischief. On, on, rushes the train. It stops a few minutes at the larger towns and hurries past the small places, delivering and catching mail matter as the train glides by. Our car has a catcher attached for taking on mail bags at small stations where the train does not stop. This catcher, which is called “Ward's catcher,” is a most ingenious, simple and effective device. The pouch the local post-master wishes to deliver to the postal car is suspended from a crane by the side of the track, shortly before train time, and is easily taken off by the

catcher, no matter how great the speed of the train. It is a large iron fork with two prongs or arms, one considerably longer than the other. The shorter arm is fastened to the outside of the car near the door in such a way that when the catcher is not in use both arms are placed vertically against the side of the car. When the mail clerk wishes to use it he turns the short arm with a lever, causing the longer arm to project from the side of the car at an acute angle, the opening between the two being in the direction which the train is going. As soon as the crane is reached and the suspended pouch is caught, the lever is turned and the pouch taken in by the clerk. Sometimes on dark and stormy nights the catcher gets too much. Being turned too soon, it tries to bring in telegraph poles and switch lights. In spite of these little inconveniences it is far ahead of the old English arrangement, which consisted of a net attached to the side of the car. This net was supposed to open and catch mail matter, but it often "muffed" the mail bag, and catchers like Ward's have been adopted in that country. The American system has also been introduced into India and Australia.

THE FAST MAIL EXPRESS.

Col. Bangs, who reorganized the railway mail service, and gave it new life and strength, in his report of 1874 recommended that a fast mail train be established between New York and Chicago, and suggested, "This train be under the control of the department so far as it is necessary for the purposes designed, and to run the distance in twenty-four

hours. It is stated by railway officials that this can be done. The importance of a run like this cannot be over-estimated. It would reduce the actual time of mail between the East and West from twelve to twenty-four hours." Postmaster General Jewell approved the idea and ordered Col. Bangs to make further investigations. The plan was entered into with the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad and the Lake Shore Railroad, whereby they constructed special postal cars for this service, and run them for ten months, between Chicago and New York, always on time. Congress, however, with its "penny wise and pound foolish" policy reduced the compensation for train mail cars, and as a consequence the fast mail trains were discontinued for want of money to pay the cost of running. The experiment had, however, been so successful, that appropriations were soon made for this purpose, after a hard struggle by friends of the service, and fast mail trains have been extended so that they now reach nearly every part of the country.

THE DANGERS OF A RAILWAY POSTAL CLERK'S LIFE.

In the year ending June, 1888, there were 248 accidents to trains upon which postal clerks were employed, resulting in the killing of four clerks, and serious wounding of sixty-three, while forty-five received slight injuries. Although the postal cars are fitted up with every device that American inventive genius has yet conceived for lessening the dangers attendant upon wrecks, such as axes, hammers, saws, and crowbars, with safety bars overhead in the cars, to which the clerks can cling when the cars roll off

an embankment, there are few more dangerous pursuits in life than this. Wherever any cars are wrecked upon mail trains, the postal car is sure to be among the number. In addition to dangers from railroad accidents, the trains are liable to be "held up" by mail robbers, who often handle their pistols rather carelessly. For the hardships they are obliged to undergo, the dangers to which their life is liable, and the expert work they render the government, the salaries of these men seem altogether too small, ranging as they do from \$900 to \$1300 per year.

IMPORTANCE OF PERMANENCY.

The greatest drawback to the improvement of the railway post-office is the fact that it is sometimes made a political machine. If the clerks and higher officials are to be changed with every change of the administration, their chairs will hardly be warm before they are removed and a green set of employees taken on. How can it be expected that men competent to discharge the duties of this difficult calling will devote themselves to it when they know that their hold upon office is to last but a short time? Ignorance and carelessness in this service can cause the public more inconvenience and greater loss than in any other department, and it is a good thing for the country that the railway mail service positions bid fair to be taken out of those offices which are considered the "spoils of war." Some of the men who obtain their positions through influence are as well qualified to fill them as the summer boarder who asked the farmer, "What's that yellow stuff you are feeding the chickens?"

“That’s corn, mister.”

“What is this in this bin?”

“That’s wheat.”

“What are these other things?”

“Rye, oats, barley,—say, mister, what’s your business when at home in Chicago?” “I am a grain speculator.” And as all grain speculators ought to know what grain looks like, so postal clerks ought to be able to read writing. A new man was appointed to one of the eastern runs, and the head clerk assigned him to the distribution of the paper mail. It was soon noticed that he distributed some of the papers and let the others go by, not seeming to know what to do with them, and the head clerk upon investigation found that this specimen of “influence” did not know how to read writing, and of course could only distribute papers with printed addresses. It is needless to add that at the next stop an assistant who could read writing was telegraphed for.

TRouble WITH THE RAILROADS.

Another need of the railway mail service is larger appropriations by Congress, which would enable the service to obtain railroad facilities at fair rates. Ever since the introduction of this service there has been more or less clashing with the railroads, and the fault has not all been upon one side. Every little while a bill would be introduced in Congress requiring the railroads to carry the mail at certain fixed rates, which oftentimes were less than the cost of the train service, with large penalties for refusal or neglect on the part of the railroads. It is to be hoped that the

government will be liberal in future with this branch of the service.

THE GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS.

During the first years of the Railway Mail Service, George B. Armstrong had charge of the western division, and Harrison Park of the eastern. In 1869 Col. Armstrong was called to Washington and given entire control of the railway post-office service, and made the first General Superintendent. He served but two years in the position, but grand additions were made during that time, for the Union Pacific Railroad was added to the service, and lines were established as far as New Brunswick and between Washington and Indianapolis, and Milwaukee and St. Paul. Owing to failing health he resigned, and was succeeded by Geo. S. Bangs, May 3, 1871. Mr. Bangs reorganized the service. Among his important improvements were the separation of the mail by states, establishment of eight new lines, and a division of the service. His improvements made it practically what it is to-day. He also saw the fast mail experiment of 1875 and 1876 through to its discontinuance. Upon his recommendation, February 3, 1876, T. N. Vail was appointed his successor. During his administration there was a special commission on railway transportation which was unable to agree upon a report. He was succeeded by William B. Thompson, who was promoted from the Superintendency of the ninth division. During his term of office the railway mail service was reorganized by an act of congress. Upon the last day of 1884 Thompson was promoted to Second Assistant

Post-master General, and John Jameson was promoted to General Superintendent. He held the office until 1885, being succeeded by Thos. E. Nash. June 1, 1888, William L. Bancroft assumed the duties of General Superintendent, being the seventh who has held that office.

CHAPTER V.

THE SPECIAL AGENT SYSTEM.

What it is.—Murder Will Out.

WHAT IT IS.

The idea of a special agent or post-office inspector did not originate in this country, but it started, as did many other postal ideas, in England, where these agents were called post-office surveyors. The system was first organized in this country in 1840 and has proved a very useful branch of the department. It ferrets out frauds on the government and the public, keeps an eye on the general administration of the service, investigates complaints that relate to deprecations, watches suspected people, arrests those who use the mails for illegal purposes, detects and arrests post-office employees who rob the mail, and in fact embraces a much wider range of action than any mere detective service. The members of this force must be courageous and shrewd, as well as possessing a great deal of tact, combined with a thorough knowledge of human nature. It is not the province of this work to tell detective stories, as that has already been done in books written by post-office inspectors.

MURDER WILL OUT.

It is an interesting study to watch how the improved schemes of crime are always equalled by greater ingenuity displayed in their discovery. The reverse of this is also true, for as new and more complicated bank locks are invented, more powerful tools and new ways of reaching the hidden treasure are also found. But it is true that, "murder will out," with very few exceptions. The post-office inspectors sometimes find themselves at fault in tracing mail robbers, but other means outside of the department get upon the right track and the criminal is hunted down. The true story of the capture of some mail robbers, told in Harper's Magazine, well illustrates this. Merchants and others in Philadelphia who had dealings with Boston found their most valuable and important letters constantly miscarried. They disappeared without a clue, and the correspondents soon complained at the post-office department, which upon full information applied itself with its most skillful detective force to the discovery of the thieves, but without success. Similar detective skill differently employed struck the clue. The detective agency of an Express Company was busily engaged in the search for a valuable package that had been stolen, and some of the agents who had been shadowing two suspicious persons, followed them from a house in Prince street to the office of the American Express Company, at the corner of Broadway and Fourth street. The suspicious persons here left two packages addressed to Canada. When they left, the detectives entered the office, and

told the agents of the company their suspicions that the packages contained stolen goods. The packages were at once opened. One was found to contain a mail bag and the other a traveling bag or satchel, in which were the stamps of a mail route agent's outfit. This discovery was at once made known at the post-office, and its agent carefully examined the contents of two bags. The mail bag contained mutilated letters which had been mailed at York, Pa., and the satchel the working tools of a route agent upon the Pennsylvania Railroad. Here was a long sought clue, and the post-office and the express detectives followed it closely to the end. The satchel had been stolen from the mail wagon while going from the New York post-office to Jersey City. One of the drivers was arrested, and his capture led to that of the apparent leader of the gang, a woman with whom he lived and other confederates. The woman's house was searched, and in a trunk claimed by her were found letters mailed a few days since in Philadelphia, containing checks payable in Boston. Other letters were found from which the enclosures had been taken, and it appeared that money had been paid upon forged endorsements of signatures obtained in this way. The last man arrested was a mail driver, who allowed the bags to be taken from the wagon. When the bags had been thoroughly rifled they were carefully done up in packages and sent by express to various distant cities, addressed to fictitious names. All trace of the bags thus disappeared. It was a clever scheme, but not clever enough. As Fielding is fond of saying: "It hath been remarked by some

wise philosopher, that the ingenuity which is devoted to knavery if turned to honest industry would not only suffice to carry the world far upward toward virtue, but would make the knaves prosperous and respectable citizens."

CHAPTER VI.

AT WASHINGTON.

The Home of the Post-office Department.—Duties of the Chief Officers.—The First Assistant Postmaster General.—The Second Assistant Postmaster General.—How the Star Routes are awarded.—The Third Assistant Postmaster General.—How Dead Letters are Resurrected.—Even Postmasters are Liable to Error.—Broken down Clergymen in Demand.—Honesty the Best Policy.—The Government Old Paper Business.—The Imps in the Dead Letter Office.—Millions of Dollars Found in Dead Letters.—Curious Articles without Number.—How to Keep Letters out of the Dead Letter Office.

THE HOME OF THE POST-OFFICE DEPARTMENT.

A whole block is given to the beautiful Corinthian building in Washington, which is the home of the post-office department. It is bounded by Seventh, Eighth, E and F Streets, and is 300 feet long by 204 feet wide. It contains 85 departments. The inner offices look upon a grassy courtyard enclosed by the building. The greater part was designed by F. A. Walter, but other architects have had charge of the extensions which have been added from time to time. The main entrance is on 7th Street, where there is a rich and ornate vestibule whose marble ceiling is supported by four marble columns. Walls, niches, floors, all are marble. The other entrances are also elegantly decorated, and are marvels of the designer's art.

DUTIES OF THE CHIEF OFFICERS.

Prior to 1829 the Postmaster General was not a member of the Cabinet, but General Jackson's invitation to his Postmaster General to take a seat in his cabinet was a precedent followed by all succeeding presidents. The head of the post-office department, which is second only to the treasury in importance, receives a salary of eight thousand dollars per year, while his three assistant-postmaster generals each draw four thousand dollars a year from the national government. He also has a chief clerk at a salary of \$2,200, a stenographer at \$1,800, and a dozen or more special employees. He has general supervision of the whole department.

The First Assistant Postmaster General's duties consist of the management of five divisions, appointment, bond, salary and allowance, free delivery and blank agency. All questions relating to establishment and discontinuance of post-offices, changes in location and name, appointment and removal of postmasters and agents, are referred to this department, which also has charge of the general mail, and the foreign and international postal arrangements, and furnishes the greater part of the department supplies. Rubber stamps, letter balances, official blanks, etc., etc., come from the First Assistant Postmaster General, whose work is done by about 100 clerks.

The Second Assistant Postmaster General has charge of the contract office, the inspection division, and the mail equipment division, and employs more than 100 people. The contract office has charge of the arrangement of all mail routes in the United

States, advertises for proposals for carrying the mails, receives the bids and awards the contracts to the lowest bidders. The time tables and schedules of the arrival and departure of mails, their frequency, manner of carrying, and the routes which they shall take are decided upon in this department.

The Star routes, numbering about 8,000, which go to places not yet invaded by the whistle of the locomotive and the toot of the steamboat, are made in this department. The system followed in awarding the contracts is interesting and exact. The country is divided into four postal sections, and contracts are made in one section each year, so that new contracts are made all over the country every four years. The law says, "The contract must be awarded to the lowest bidder," and upon the last day for receiving bids, three officers of the department, with assistants, assort the bids by states, open them, and pass them through a printing press which affixes the seal of the department and the date of opening. From here they go to the chief clerk of the contract office, and are examined to see if they are made out in proper form. All that are correct are assorted according to routes and recorded in the proper route books. Then the chief clerk goes through these books and selects the lowest bidder for each route, who must, when the contract is awarded to him, sign an acceptance blank that he will faithfully carry out the terms of his bid.

The Third Assistant Postmaster-General has charge of the official business of the department. The issuing of postage stamps and stamped envel-

opes, the registered letter accounts, and the dead letter division. He might be called the cashier of the department, as he issues drafts in payment of the amounts due the mail contractors, collects the postal revenues, and has general superintendence of the accounts.

HOW DEAD LETTERS ARE RESURRECTED.

There is no department in Washington, unless it be the treasury, where new money is made and the old destroyed, that is of more general interest than the dead letter office. It occupies a large room, well lighted by a glass roof and many large windows, in the F street portion of the post-office building. It is surrounded by a wide gallery, connected with the lower part by an iron stair-case. The lady clerks occupy this gallery, while the men work on the floor below. Bags upon bags of dead letters and other matter from all over the world come to this room every day. The chief clerk and his assistants first look through their daily mail of 15,000 dead letters to see if any have come that cannot properly be termed "dead." Postmasters and postal clerks are human and liable to err, and about 5,000 letters which have gone astray through their carelessness reach the dead letter office every year. The clerk may send to a place in Illinois, a letter plainly addressed to a place in Maine, and the postmaster will keep it the usual time, and then forward it to the dead letter office. After the chief clerk and his assistants have examined the letters, they are sent to men who, sitting at long tables, quickly cut open the envelopes with sharp knives and examine the

contents to see if there is anything of value. These men who open the letters are all elderly and present a venerable appearance. Quite a number of them are broken down clergymen, who are given the preference in appointments in this department, for the department thinks that those who have reached old age and seen that "honesty is the best policy" will be less liable to yield to the temptation which an outsider would think must be ever present at the opener's table. It would be so easy to slip a bank note or some valuable article into one's pocket, while opening a letter, and detection would be well nigh impossible; but as one of the clerks remarked, "We soon forget that the money we find in the letters is money. It does not seem anything more than printed paper." Each opener makes a record of what money and articles he finds and puts the letter containing these articles one side for future disposition. Letters containing nothing of value are sent by a messenger to the lady employees who look them through to find, if possible, an address to which they can be returned. If none can be found the letters are reduced to paper pulp and sold. This old paper business of the dead letter department brings the government several thousand dollars a year.

The lady clerks sometimes find letters written by friends of theirs without other signature than initials or the first name, which they return to the sender. This occasionally gives rise to the thought that the dead letter office must be blessed with second sight, for if not, how could the clerks return a letter with

no name or town upon it, or no further clue than simply "that Bob has the measles," or "Ellen is to be married next week." As a usual thing, however, the clerks have little time to read the interesting letters that were never intended for more than one person's eyes, and that person not a clerk in the dead letter office. They have their little jokes as well as any one, and some times cannot resist the temptation to add a word or two to the letters they send back. In one love letter received at this office some years ago the sender wrote, "I do hope, my dear, that none of the imps in the dead letter office will get hold of this letter," and the clerk in returning it added, "I am very sorry, but the imps did get it." It must have made the young man blush when the letter was returned to him.

Immense quantities of money are found in dead letters, the bank notes, checks, drafts, money orders, etc., found yearly amounting to several millions of dollars. If no address is given where this money can be returned it is deposited in the treasury subject to application of the owner. A careful record is made of all letters containing valuable articles, and a most minute history is kept of their travels amongst the dead letter clerks. We have seen that the opener makes a record whenever he finds a letter containing money, and each morning these records of the previous day are recorded by the head of the opening table, and then the letters are taken from the safe through assistants, recounted and the record verified. From the head of the opening table they go to the money branch and are divided among different clerks

to be forwarded to the writer of the letter. Each clerk receipts for every letter that he receives from the opening table, and again records them in his department. When returned to the sender each letter is accompanied by a receipt blank, which must be filled out, signed and returned to the office. When it reaches the dead letter office it is examined by two clerks and compared with the record to see if all is correct.

In the dead letter office there is a show case crammed full of articles whose owner's address could not be found. These are kept for six months, and then sold at auction. A careful record is made of the sales, and the amount received can be recovered by the owner if applied for within four years. There is here a more varied assortment than any pawn broker's store or second hand shop can show. Comedy and tragedy are closely mingled on the shelves. Precious keep-sakes, the loss of which has caused many a tear, are here waiting for the "Going, going, gone," of the auctioneer. In this collection are found articles which only a very original person would have thought of sending by mail,—a horned toad from Texas, a crocodile from Florida, patchwork quilts that some fond mother with misty eyes has pieced for John in his city home, hats and bonnets which will never reach the heads they were intended for, baby clothes and dainty undergarments which may be bought by some enterprising second hand dealer, jewelry which was to have made "my girl" happy, and photographs almost without number,

nearly 40,000 being received every year at the dead letter office.

These letters and parcels do not become dead on account of the inefficiency of the postal service. Far from it. No branch of the government is conducted in a more businesslike way and with fewer errors than this. The poison which kills these letters is in almost every instance the carelessness of the senders. Nearly 10,000 letters reach the dead letter office every year with no address whatever on the envelope. A set of rules like the following may seem foolish, but if they were followed many a clerk in the dead letter office would be out of work :

1—Put the letter in an envelope. Do not mail letter and envelope separately.

2—Have the envelope addressed, for postal clerks are not as a class blessed with the clairvoyant ability of reading sealed letters.

3—Write the address so that it can be read.

4—In the left hand upper corner of the envelope put, “If not called for in . . . return to,” for it sometimes happens that letters are wrongly addressed, or the person written to has moved away.

5—In addition to signing the letter, “Your affectionate John” add your full address, with the street and number, city and state where you live, so that if any of the previous rules have been disregarded and your letter has reached the dead letter office, the clerks can return it to you without trouble, and without being obliged to read the letter through in search for some clue to the address.

CHAPTER VII.

POST-OFFICES, POSTMASTERS AND CLERKS.

Early History of the New York Post-office.—Postmasters and Clerks of a Hundred Years Ago.—The Post-office Family in 1889.—In the Early Part of the 19th Century.—It Goes Through War and Yellow Fever.—The Club House of the City.—The City Grew Bigger.—The Father of the Mugwumps.—The New York Post-office in a Church.—Then and Now.—A Novel Feature of the New York Office.—The Chicago Post-office.—The Work Day of a City Post-office. A Solid Building in Boston.—The Distribution Center for Over Half a Million People.—A Wilderness of Pigeon Holes.—Stamps Cancelled by Machinery.—Interesting Facts About Letter Carriers.—Left to Plod Along on Foot.—The City Delivery.—How the Money is Handled.—Newspapers, Cashier's Department and Inquiry Office.—A Glance at Post-office Work in Chicago.—Post-office Names.—Odd Cognomens Bestowed Upon Some Offices.—A Democratic Postmaster's Good-By.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE NEW YORK POST-OFFICE.

When an enterprising boomer lays out the town lots of a future metropolis, his first act is to ask for the establishment of a post-office; but those who founded New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and other eastern cities, let the post office take care of itself, relying, as we have seen, upon the coffee house delivery. The history of the growth of a post-office in any one of these cities will do for all, if the reader makes a few changes in dates, names of postmasters and locations of buildings. Let us follow the development of the New York post-office. The *New York Gazette* for the first week of May, 1732, contains the following advertisement: "The New York post-office will be removed to-morrow to the uppermost of the two houses on Broadway, opposite Beaver Street, Richard Nicholl, Esq., P. M." It was, however, a long time before the people would give up the coffee house delivery, which had this advantage

over the government office, that there was no charge for postage. In 1775, those citizens of New York who wanted to dissolve business relations with the mother country, set up what they called a constitutional post-office to distinguish it from what they considered the unconstitutional one of the British Government. This was kept at Holt's printing office on Water Street, near the coffee house. Upon the evacuation of New York by the British, a post-office was set up at 38 Smith Street.

POSTMASTER AND CLERKS OF A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

Sebastian Bauman, who was the first postmaster under the Federal Government, kept the office in his grocery store. The official notice of his appointment differed slightly from those sent out by the department in 1889. It read as follows :

NEW YORK, October 3d, 1789.

SIR,—It gives me pleasure to inform you that I have it in my power to make the offer of an office to you which I hope may not be unacceptable. It is that of Deputy Postmaster for the city of New York. Your friends have given you a character so agreeable to me that I have no doubt we shall perfectly harmonize in our operations.

If it is agreeable to you to accept of the same you will be kind enough to inform me, and from the time of your acceptance you may consider yourself in office. I am, sir, with great esteem, your most obedient servant,

SAMUEL OSGOOD.

SEBASTIAN BAUMAN, ESQ.

The condition of the clerks, as regards their hours of work, and their relations to the postmaster, seems strange to us of the latter part of the 19th century. They lived in the house with the postmaster's family, after the same fashion as in England at that date, where in some cases now the banking clerks live with their employers. The office was opened at 7 a. m.

every day except Sunday, and at 8 o'clock the clerks breakfasted with the postmaster. They would then be compelled to work very steadily until the dinner hour. Tea was served at 5 in the afternoon, when the office was closed for the day. The postmaster furnished the clerks with their food gratis, and on New Year's day it was a custom with Colonel Bauman to present each of his assistants with a new suit of clothes. He was wealthy and very liberal toward his clerks, who, however, were well paid by the government, their salaries amounting to much more in proportion to the cost of living than the salaries paid the clerks of the New York office at this day.

THE POST-OFFICE FAMILY IN 1889.

Although the clerks in the New York office to-day do not live with the postmaster's family, yet very harmonious relations exist between the postmaster and his employees, as is evidenced by the following memorial presented to Postmaster Van Cott by the letter carriers and clerks of the New York post-office, July 4th, 1889, which read as follows: "Honorable Cornelius Van Cott: As a means of expressing the sentiment of esteem and loyalty they feel towards you, their honored chief, the Clerks and Carriers Associations of the New York post-office, adopt this address; and in selecting the memorial day of Independence to commemorate this event more auspiciously, we trust that this token of our esteem will be regarded in that golden sunlight of honor to whom honor is due.

On assuming the duties of postmaster, you promised to remedy existing evils, to examine and hear charges yourself, that the humblest employee can always expect justice, and that employees can in the future, depend on the assistance and co-opera-

tion of the postmaster himself, and that the welfare of your subordinates will be considered your own. In the brief space of time you have been postmaster, you have given sufficient evidence of interest in the workings of the postal service, by personally inspecting the different departments, thus directly acquainting yourself, and not depending upon indirect information, thereby affiliating more closely with your subordinates.

That the relations between us in the future will be amicable, we have abundant evidence in your past record, which shines forth resplendent after many years service of the people with your long and varied experience.

We, the Clerks and Carriers Associations of the New York post-office, will do everything in our power to promote a spirit of unanimity and loyalty in your post-office, and when called, will not be found wanting.

We thank you for your kind endeavors of good will, and will endeavor to reciprocate."

IN THE EARLY PART OF THE 19TH CENTURY.

As the efficiency of the postal system increased, and the government passed stringent laws to make the people use its facilities, the business of the New York office was augmented, and as a consequence, removal to other quarters was necessitated. It was beginning to outgrow its knee pants. In 1804, General Bailey, who was then postmaster, removed the post-office from Broadway to his house, corner of William and Garden streets. General Bailey was a man of progress, and in one of the windows of the new office, built a case containing 144 small letter boxes, which were rented to those who could afford such a luxury. He probably had two ends in view when he decided to live with his family in the upper

part of the house containing the post-office, for his official eye could always be upon the office, and this plan would also give him a low rent. The office was closed between twelve and one o'clock for dinner, and any persons who called at that hour, looked through the mail themselves, and if they found any letters belonging to them, left the money for postage on a table in the center of the room.

IT GOES THROUGH WAR AND YELLOW FEVER.

The war of 1812 reduced the postal force of the New York office just one-third, for it so diminished the amount of mail delivered that two clerks were able to do all the work, and one of the original three was dismissed.

During the yellow fever epidemic of 1822, the post-office was removed to Greenwich, to be outside the infected district. With the return of cold weather, the office resumed business at the old stand.

In 1825 the business had grown to such immense proportions, that eight clerks were employed, and larger quarters were obtained at the Academy building on Garden, now Exchange street. The rack of 144 letter boxes was multiplied by six, and to the surprise of the citizens, these letter boxes were all rented by business houses within a short time.

THE CLUB HOUSE OF THE CITY.

The post-office was the social club house of those days, and its frequenters were always overflowing with wit and wisdom. Many a practical joke of old postal times is told to-day by the oldest inhabitant,

who rubs his hands in glee when he thinks how smart men were when he was a boy. In the war of 1812, one of the junior clerks was drafted, but hired a substitute who was killed. This gave rise to many discussions in the post-office, as to whether this clerk whose substitute was killed, ought not to get a pension for his heirs, and at the same time receive pay for the work he was then doing at the post-office. This question was argued pro and con by the eminent lawyers and editors who found amusement and social chat at the place where they got their mail.

THE CITY GREW BIGGER.

In 1827, when New York was beginning to assume the airs of a metropolis, she became ashamed of the humble post-office in Garden street, and thought that the growing importance of the city demanded more pretentious quarters for this branch of the public service. Accordingly the Federal government leased the basement of the new Exchange building, and the post-office was established there with two delivery windows, 3,000 delivery boxes, 22 clerks, and 22 carriers.

In the disastrous fire of December 16th, 1835, the Exchange building, with its basement post-office, was burned to the ground, but owing to the exertions of the clerks, none of the mail was lost. The next day after the fire, the office was open for business in a couple of stores on Pine street, but these stores were not adapted to its needs, and it was removed to the rotunda in City Hall park. This new location was so far from the business center, that a letter de-

livery was established where the custom house now stands.

THE FATHER OF THE MUGWUMPS.

Jonathan J. Coddington, who was appointed Postmaster in 1836, may be regarded as the ancestor of the mugwumps. He certainly was no politician, for when the chairman of the ward committee asked him for an assessment of \$50, Mr. Coddington, drawing himself up to his full height, said, "I refuse to pay any such assessment as this you speak of. I'd have you understand that I am postmaster of New York City and not postmaster of a ward committee." Mr. Coddington was afterwards removed.

THE NEW YORK POST-OFFICE IN A CHURCH.

In 1844, the Federal government, in answer to the demand to remove the post-office down town, purchased the Middle Dutch Church, and tried to make it over, so as to answer the needs of a post-office, but its beautiful steeple and the Dutch inscription on the walls inside that "My House shall be a House of Prayer," proved that such a task was impossible. In June, 1869, the foundations of the present post-office were laid in City Hall Park, and when the office was removed to this new building in August, 1875, church and state were once more separate.

THEN AND NOW.

A brief comparison between the then of a 100 years ago, and the now of 1889, in the New York post-office, is interesting. There were no letter carriers in those days, and every one who expected a

letter, paper or parcel through the mail, went to the post-office to get it. All mail matter had to be in the office one-half hour before the time set for the closing of the bags, and if not deposited within that limit it was left over until the next mail, two or three days later.

The income of the New York office for one year, 1786, was \$2,789.84. To-day the expense of conducting the office is 100 times greater than it was 100 years ago, pay rolls alone amounting to about \$200,000 per month. There are over 1,100 carriers who receive from \$600 to \$1,000 a year, and 1,200 clerks with salaries ranging from \$480 to \$1,380 a year. In the last three fiscal years, the receipts have shown an increase of \$1,040,000.

Appointment and promotion are now governed by ability and conduct to a greater extent than in the earlier days. At one time, a ward politician obtained a position in the post-office to "kill postage stamps," that is, cancel the stamps on the letters. One morning's work was enough for him, and at noon he left his table, went to the postmaster, and complainingly said, "Look here, I wanted an appointment, not hard work, and if this is the best thing you can do for me, I'll quit."

A NOVEL FEATURE OF THE NEW YORK OFFICE.

There is one novelty in the New York post-office which might be adopted to advantage in other lines of business. During Postmaster James' administration, he introduced the employment of deaf mutes, and the noisy men were kept quiet by putting a dummy between them.

THE CHICAGO POST-OFFICE.

Assistant Postmaster John M. Hubbard of the Chicago office, in speaking of the needed increase of employees in that office, recently said: "The Chicago post-office is the second largest in the country. Its net surplus last year amounted to \$1,800,000. The New York office has 1,200 carriers, while Chicago, with a vastly greater area, has but 490.

The expense of running the Chicago office amounted to 34 per cent of the gross receipts; those of the New York office 36, and of Philadelphia 45 per cent. A great advantage, too, which the Philadelphia office has over ours is in the adoption of the 'van system.' The carriers are taken in large vans and conveyed to their routes, effecting a great saving of time. Ours are obliged to furnish their own transportation, in street cars or buggies, and much time is necessarily lost. This is shown by the length of time it takes to send a letter from one division of the city to another. Each carrier in Chicago handles yearly the enormous sum of 704,000 pieces as against 463,000 in New York, 457,000 in Boston, 634,000 in Philadelphia, and only 280,000 in Brooklyn.

The distributors, who go on duty at 5:30 at night work until 6:30 the next morning, and each one handles about forty thousand pieces of mail. Thirteen hours a day is too much work for a man."

THE WORK DAY OF A CITY POST-OFFICE.

Having traced the early history of the New York post-office, let us take a glance at the inside workings of the Boston office. A trip through this office will give us an excellent idea of the way in which the

business of the large post-offices of the United States, each handling millions of dollars, and billions of pieces of mail matter yearly, is conducted. A Boston *Herald* reporter wandered through this granite beehive of postal workers to a good purpose, as is shown in the following condensed account of his report.

The building is, in its general character, very like the government buildings in other cities in the United States. In this respect the impartial observer might say that it is very like frozen pudding that has been run into a mould and set up to be admired before using. Those who have travelled over the country have noticed, perhaps, that the general style of the government buildings in the different large cities has little variation. The enormous pile in Washington that houses the state, war and navy departments, seems either to have served as a model for post-offices and custom houses and United States court houses in other cities, or to have been modelled upon them. It seems to have been built strongly enough to last till the crack of doom. Everyone will remember how, in its unfinished state, it resisted the progress of the great fire of November, 1872, and for that reason, everybody must have a feeling of gratitude. Here is one of the chief stations of the public service. It cost almost \$6,000,000 to build, and it was, altogether, 16 years in building. Patience ever has its reward, and Boston's patience has been rewarded by a government building admirably suited to the varied business for which it is intended. Here is the largest post-office in the New England States; here is the chief pen-

sion office in New England; here are the United States courts and the sub-treasury, the internal revenue department and the bankruptcy office; here is the station of the signal service.

The Boston post-office is the distributing centre of the mails for about 540,000 people. Not many of these 540,000 people have ever peeped behind the strong partitions that separate the public from the working force engaged in the postal service. In the long corridors are the lock boxes, the stamp offices, the apertures for depositing the mail; but who, having deposited his letter in one of these apertures knows what becomes of it and how it happens to reach its destination. It is a very simple matter so far as you are personally concerned, this addressing a letter and stamping it and dropping it in a little slit in the wall and letting it go off to Jerusalem, Madagascar or East Boston, without any further intervention on your part. But how is it done? Let us see.

Behind the lock boxes and stamp offices, and the other places with which the public comes into direct contact, is a hall, large, very large indeed, high and light, with a gallery running around it. It is the great working centre of the post-office. Here letters are received from, and sent away to, all quarters of the earth. From any one of the galleries the onlooker beholds a bright and lively spectacle. He looks down upon a wilderness of pigeon holes, called sorting cases, delivery cases and the like, and before each of these stands a man busily putting letters in, or busily taking letters out, as the case may be.

Here every day many tons of mail matter are handled, and handled with an amazing accuracy and an almost miraculous speed.

Over against the partition on the Devonshire street side, back of the apertures which, fronting on the corridor, are labelled "city letters," and so on, is a wide wooden table upon which the letters fall in great heaps as they are dropped by the senders. At the rear edge of this table stand 10 men, each managing a cancelling machine. These cancelling machines are very ingenious devices indeed, and remarkable labor savers. Each one of them does work equal to that of four of the quickest men in the department. It is their business to cancel the stamps of the letters as they are received. And thereby hangs a tale. The Boston office is the only post-office in the United States that has the cancelling machine. These ingenious appliances were invented and perfected some three or four years ago, and they were placed in the post-office for the purpose of demonstrating their practicability and their powers as labor savers. As has been said before, each of these machines does the work of four men, and, consequently, a great saving is effected for the public service. Letters and postal cards, as they fall upon the table aforesaid—Niagaras of them are continually streaming through the apertures—are taken by the men and "faced" directly into the hopper of the machine where they are automatically adjusted, stamped, packed and propelled toward the sorting cases, ready for distribution to outgoing mails, all by one continuous mechanical operation. These machines are

speeded to run a little faster than the fastest operator can "face" letters into them, the average speed being from 100 to 150 letters per minute. The machines, of course, save all the time and space necessary for stamping by the old hand processes. The post-office department has accepted the 10 machines in the Boston office at a yearly rental of \$300 each, including care, repairs and renewal. Ten more machines are about to be placed in position, and 2500 more will probably be required to supply all the large post-offices in the country. Strange as it may seem, the post-office, although of the greatest importance to the public, is, perhaps, the last field in which labor-saving machinery has been adopted. It may be well to say that these cancelling machines were invented by a Bostonian, Mr. Etheridge, and that they are owned by Boston parties. The machines have now become absolutely indispensable, and the 10 now in operation save the labor and salaries of forty men. Their operation is amazingly quick, and they will cancel 1000 letters in the time it takes to write this paragraph.

The letters, after the stamps have been cancelled, are sorted into their respective cases, where they are arranged for transportation or immediate distribution. If they are for the city delivery they go to the city delivery cases, from which they are put later into the carriers' cases, or into the lock boxes. If they are for out of town delivery they are put into the out of town cases. They are then done up in little packages, each bearing the mark of the post-office to which it is to be sent, and are then placed in the

mail bags. Letters arriving in the mail bags for delivery through the Boston office come in similar little packages, and are at once undone and distributed. This sorting into the cases requires great dexterity and a prodigious memory. Take the city delivery alone as an example. There are at this main office about 3000 lock boxes. There are also 104 carriers, each with a specified route. Now, it is indispensable for the sorting clerks to remember whether a given letter should go to the lock boxes or to one of the 104 carriers, and also to which box or which carrier. For each box there may be a number of names, the average, possibly, being 10. Messrs. John Blank & Co. have lock box No. so and so, and there may be 10 people in the employ of this concern whose individual letters go to that box. It will easily be seen that sorting all these letters is a task requiring special qualifications. Dexterity and memory have to play important parts in this work. It is indispensable that each sorter should remember the streets on the route of each carrier, and the numbers on these streets where the carrier's route ends. This is no small task in itself, and yet, great as are the demands made upon the men whose duty it is to sort the mail, there are remarkably few errors. In this connection, it is well to state that, in one of the recent months, the Boston post-office handled over 17,000,000 pieces of first class mail matter, and over 13,000,000 pieces of second, third and fourth class matter; that the office dispatched over 35,000 pouches of mail and over 52,000 sacks; that it received over 34,000

pouches and about 50,000 sacks, and that there was only one error to every 19,234 pieces handled.

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT CARRIERS AND LOCAL LETTERS.

The city delivery division is one of the most interesting departments of the post-office. It is, and has been for years, in the direct charge of Supt. Edward T. Barker, who has brought it to a high pitch of perfection. What is called the city delivery embraces, not only the central post-office, but also 22 stations in Boston and adjacent towns. The main office employs 104 carriers to deliver the mails and 38 to collect them. The 22 stations employ 191 carriers. There are 106 clerks in the city delivery division of the main post-office and 66 clerks at the branch offices. There are 57 substitute carriers and 56 special messenger boys, 36 at the main office, making a total of 598 people employed in the direct service of the city delivery department. The carriers of the main office make from four to six trips a day. They report for duty about 6:45 o'clock in the morning, and all of them have finished by 6.30 at night. Twenty of the carriers at the outlying stations are furnished with horses and carriages to assist them in quickly covering their wide-spread districts.

The city delivery division in the main post-office is all day long a scene of activity. Each of the 104 carriers has a box, in which his letters are placed by the clerks, and before every trip each carrier removes these letters, takes them to his desk, which is very ingeniously arranged for the purpose, and sorts them for distribution over his route. When this

process of sorting is completed—a specified time being allowed for it between each trip—a bell is sounded as a signal for the men to start on their delivery routes, and they all march to the Water street door, from which point they proceed over their devious courses. A large omnibus, or barge, conveys a dozen or more of the men to distant points of the Back bay district, where each man is dropped at the beginning of his route and left to plod along on foot. Of course, some of the carriers' routes are desirable, while others are not particularly so. The Back bay and Beacon hill districts are highly esteemed by them, but some of the poorer localities of the city are not at all promising. In the business sections of the city the routes, so far as territory is concerned, are the smallest, but the mails are the largest. In some cases one side of a street may constitute an entire route, the other side being taken by another carrier. Pemberton square was a route of itself, until so many buildings were torn down to make room for the Suffolk county court house. In localities where there are great office buildings, like the Equitable, the New York and New England insurance, the Mason and the Hospital Life buildings, the routes are considerably shortened, but there are just as many recipients of letters, and the volume of mail is greater than in other parts of the town. A count is made of every piece of mail received and delivered by the post-office.

The mails for city delivery, when they arrive, are sorted in three ways. Some letters are sorted for

the lock boxes, and those that are addressed to streets and numbers go to the carriers, while letters that are addressed neither to box holders nor to streets and numbers go to the general delivery, or *poste restante*. "The *poste restante*," says the Dial Postal Guide, "is primarily designed for the delivery of the mail matter for transient residents and casual visitors. All mail matter bearing no street or box address (and the proper addresses for which are not known and cannot be found in the directory), and all mail matter found undeliverable at its street address, is placed in the *poste restante* to await call. If bearing the name and address of the sender, with a request to return within a specified time, it is, if uncalled for, returned at the expiration of that time; if no particular time is named in the request, or if it bears the name and address of the sender only, without request to return, it is returned at the expiration of 30 days." There is a special window at the *poste restante* called the women's window, from which all all letters addressed to women and intended for delivery on call are delivered. No mail matter addressed to a woman will be delivered to a man, unless he presents her written order, and the same rule applies where women apply for men's letters.

The special delivery system is a branch of the postal system that is steadily growing in importance. Boston, it is said, makes a better use of the special delivery system than any other city in the country. Here the special delivery has become almost, if not absolutely, indispensable. It provides for the immediate delivery of any letter or package bearing a

10 cent special delivery stamp, in addition to the regular postage, within the carrier limits of a free delivery office, between the hours of 7 A. M. and 11 P. M., and within a radius of one mile of all other post-offices between 7 A. M. and 9 P. M. An organized force of messenger boys is employed to do the work. These boys are paid a specified sum for every letter they deliver, and those at the Boston office earn, on the average, about \$30 a month. These special deliveries are made every day in the week, Sunday included. As soon as the mail clerks find a special delivery letter or package, it is sent by a travelling basket across the office to the messenger's section in the gallery, from which point it is at once delivered. Within a few seconds after it has reached the office it has left for its destination in the hands of the messenger.

There is forwarded to the main Boston office every morning a complete record of the work of every employee at the 22 stations, so that it is possible to know at a glance just when every clerk and carrier reported for duty, and to keep otherwise posted on affairs relating to the discipline enforced by the post-master.

There are over 800 street letter boxes from which collections are made by the Boston office and its sub-stations. To people who reside within this postal district it is well known that some of these boxes are painted red and others green. The red boxes are the most important ones, and they are visited every hour by the carriers. The others are visited four or five times a day, and on Sundays

twice. All boxes in the city proper and all that are located on what are called the central office collection routes in the station districts are collected at midnight.

HANDLING MONEY.—TWO IMPORTANT BRANCHES AND THEIR WORK DESCRIBED.

For the utmost perfection of system the registry division is to be commended. It is in the charge of Supt. A. B. Weston. This office employs 23 clerks, receives for registration about 150,000 letters a year, and delivers at its window in the post-office square corridor about 200,000 registered letters a year, and by carrier and otherwise over 100,000 pieces of registered mail. Beside all this, it is constantly handling pouches which pass through here for transmission to other offices. Now, it must be remembered that every identical letter or parcel that is registered is carefully accounted for from the time it is received at the office until the time it is delivered to the person whose address it bears. The registered letter division is that portion of the mail service by which the government ensures security to the senders of valuable matter. Any article of the first, third or fourth class of mail matter may be registered by the payment of a 10 cent fee in addition to the usual postage. Every letter intended for registration must be fully and plainly addressed and securely sealed, and it must have on the outside the name and address of the sender, either in writing or in print, and all this must be done by the sender, as the post-office employees are forbidden by the government to do this for the public. This is quite natural, as the employees of the

registered letter division have enough responsibility, in all conscience, without gratuitously taking upon themselves any more. Every transaction of the register department is designed to secure safety to the letter or package entrusted to its care. Of every identical piece of mail there is an accurate written record, and for every transfer of it from one person to another there is a recorded signature. The work of the registered letter department may be briefly described as being divided into five sections, the receiving, mailing, pouching, opening and delivering sections. A letter when received is registered in a manifold book, from which a receipt is given to the sender, and a slip recording the transaction is torn off and forwarded to the office of destination. At the time of record the "manifold" made a copy that is retained by the Boston office. All this is done at one operation. The letter is then passed from the receiving clerk to a mailing clerk, and the latter gives the former a receipt for it. After the cancelling and office stamps have been impressed upon the letter, a serial number having been affixed to it, the letter is put in an envelope with other registered mail, all of which is numbered, and this registered envelope is put in one of the pouches belonging to the register department. But before passing from any one division of the office to any other, a full written receipt is given by the receiving section to the delivering section. The registered pouches are quite distinct in appearance from those belonging to the ordinary mail. They are of strong canvas, marked, for purposes of distinction, with red stripes. They are

locked by an ingenious rotary lock, operating a dial, which registers the number of the pouch. This lock cannot be tampered with in any way without changing the registered number on the dial. The registered pouches never leave the care of their especial department either in preparation or in transmission. They are put upon the mail wagons by employees of the register division, and these men accompany them until they are delivered to some other properly authorized officials of the register department of the post-office. They are thus as carefully guarded and watched as they are carefully prepared. The system of handling and registering provides not only for an accurate record of the work of the department, but it insures the surest possible checks upon all persons who have handled the registered mail either in piece or in bulk. The Boston registry division exchanges pouches with 42 other offices. It ranks fifth in the service in the amount of business transacted. Some idea of the value and security of the general register department of the United States postal service may be arrived at when it is stated that the United States treasurer alone sends annually through the registered mail over \$800,000,000. The total value of the matter handled by the registry division is something almost fabulous. Every employe of this division is saddled with serious responsibility. He or she cannot receive or dispose of a single item of the mail without giving his or her signature for the transaction. If, by any accident or design, a registered package is lost, the responsibility falls upon the employe who cannot account satisfactorily for the article after

having signed for it. The lady who delivers the registered mail at the registry delivery window at the post-office in Boston, handles, as has been stated, at least 200,000 registered pieces per annum. It is her duty to obtain satisfactory evidence of the identity of every person into whose hands she delivers a letter or package. Failing to do this, and in the event of her delivering to the wrong party, the responsibility rests with her, and she has to bear the loss if claim is put in to the department.

The most assiduous care is taken by the register division to prevent any error or fraud. So admirable, indeed, is its system of checks that a registered letter can be traced all over the country into the very hands through which it has passed, and to the very hour when it was in the keeping of any of the employees of the service. Mistakes almost never happen, and a phenomenal accuracy of operation prevails. There is a very interesting record book kept here at the Boston office, in which the particulars of every parcel of registered mail,—first the letter's "serial number," then its office of origin, then its address, and other particulars in their proper columns—so that it is possible to see at a glance just when the letter was received, who delivered it, by what department it was delivered and when it was delivered. Every night before closing, the registry division has to take an account of stock and strike a balance, as it were. It has to go over the transactions of the day and ascertain, with the utmost correctness, just how matters stand. This

division is one of the most interesting in the entire postal service.

The money order division, however, shares with the registry department a large measure of public interest. Here again is a complete system of checks and careful accountants. Here every year many millions are paid out and millions are received for transmission.

NEWSPAPERS, CASHIER'S DEPARTMENT AND INQUIRY OFFICE.

In the basement on the Post-office square side is the department devoted to the newspaper mail, under the charge of Mr. E. A. Reed. About 2000 sacks of papers are sent away from here every day. They say that the Americans are the greatest newspaper readers on the face of the earth. One would think so after a visit to the post-office. The papers (and packages of merchandise as well) come down to the basement by means of a shoot from the floor above. Into this shoot the mail matter is poured in great quantities, dropping in great heaps upon the tables, from which it is taken and sorted. Sorting newspapers is, to the stranger's eye, even a more interesting task than sorting letters, whether they are sorted into "bag racks" or "ovens." An "oven," by the way, is a great, circular structure, divided into pigeon holes of all sizes, each one labelled with the name of a post-office. The "oven" is a dozen or 15 feet high, and inside it the sorters stand and throw their papers into the respective boxes, of which there are 200 or 300. These sorters are the sharpshooters of the post-office. They are as adept

in shooting newspaper into pigeon holes as Capt. Bogardus and Buffalo Bill are adept in shooting glass balls when riding at full speed on horseback. These men throw the papers by a quick twist of the wrist to points two and three times as high as their heads, and they do so, apparently, with the slightest exertion, and certainly with the perfection of accuracy. Why an oven is called an oven, unless because it is a very hot place to work in, it is difficult to say. The work at the bag racks is pleasanter than in the ovens, for the sorters are not cooped up as in prison cells. One, two or three hundred bags, as the case may be, are suspended in a semi-circle, or a series of semi-circles, on iron racks, each bag hung before an appropriate label designating its destination, and into these bags the sorting clerks throw the papers.

About 1,000,000 pounds a month of this sort of mail matter is handled in this department. Since the post-office went into competition with the express companies, and began the transportation of packages as merchandise, the business of the department has increased immensely, and the work of the employees has become in many cases more burdensome than ever before. Every description of package goes through this mailing department in the basement. Merchandise in thick wrappings of paper, and merchandise not wrapped at all—boots, trousers, hoopskirts, rubber overshoes, bunches of keys, papers of pins, books, pamphlets—come down the shoot in helter skelter jumbles.

A passageway, running under the building and ex-

tending from Water street to Milk street, opens into a wide, subterranean area, where the mail wagons come to load and unload. There are dozens of these wagons, and they are constantly coming and going between the post-office and the different railway stations. They bring the mails to the building and take them away. There is also a printing office in the basement for the use of the various departments of the post-office. Immense quantities of printed forms of one sort or another are used in the service, and the little office down stairs is kept busy in supplying them.

In the gallery, on the Water street side, is the cashier's department, in the charge of Mr. Henry S. Adams, who has been in the United States postal service ever since he was a boy, having served in other post-offices before he came to Boston. Mr. Adams, as cashier, has charge of the revenues of the post-office, and of the stocks of stamps and stamped envelopes. The sale of stamps, etc., in 1860 was about \$10,000 per month; it is now about \$150,000 per month. In 1853, when Mr. Adams came to the Boston office, there were only 30 mail carriers and 60 clerks, and the pay-roll of the establishment was \$9,000 per month. It is now about \$80,000 per month. In the cashier's department a stock of stamps of all denominations, and of stamped envelopes, amounting in value from \$250,000 to \$300,000, is always kept on hand. These are stored in a great fire-proof room (but then, of course, the post-office itself is a fire-proof structure), and they are sold to the stamp departments down stairs as wanted. The

stamps are kept in a great safe capable of holding many millions of them, and they range in denomination all the way from one cent to \$60.

At the other end of the Water street gallery is the inquiry office, of which Mr. W. E. B. Ryder is the superintendent. This place might properly be called the puzzle department of the post-office. To Mr. Ryder is sent all the unmailable matter that comes to the office, and he and his five clerks do their best (and their best is quite wonderful when you come to investigate it) to set right the blunders and the ignorant mistakes and the careless omissions of the general public. The letters, newspapers, packages, postal cards that come with wrong addresses, illegible addresses and no addresses at all, are sent up here to the puzzle department. Mr. Ryder is constantly in receipt of packages of merchandise and of dainty little packets of presents that come all very nicely done up, but are all innocent of addresses. If, by opening them, any clew can be found to the senders, or the persons for whom they are designed, measures are taken accordingly; if no clew can be discovered, the things, of course, are never delivered. The gross carelessness of humanity is pretty well illustrated by the amount of work that is put upon the inquiry division of the post-office. Hundreds of letters come without addresses, and hundreds of letters with addresses come without stamps. Letters come very neatly and very distinctly addressed, say, to "John Smith, Massachusetts;" to "Peter Robinson, 114 Blank street, Chicago, Maryland." and so on. These are evidences of absent mindedness more than of

ignorance. It is a common thing to find letters addressed to such and such a number, Boston, or such and such a street in such and such a State. Misdirected letters are among the common things of life. Illegibly addressed letters are amazingly numerous. The inquiry office is fitted out with a complete set of directories of almost every place under the sun, and it is really astonishing how quickly clerks will unravel the conundrums that come to them on the envelopes, sometimes at the rate of 1,000 or 1,500 a day. Writing that puzzles all the other members of the force is deciphered by the clerks of the inquiry division instantaneously, and if they cannot decipher it Mr. Ryder can. If people could only realize how much better they would serve themselves by carefully addressing their letters, the work of the inquiry division would be materially lessened, and hundreds of thousands of letters would every year more quickly reach their destination.

The general delivery window, where foreign letters are handed to people who call for them, is often the scene of amusing episodes. The department will not, for reasons best known to itself, engage an interpreter, and so when a man comes along unable to make himself understood in English, all that the clerk can do is to hand him a fistful of letters and ask him to pick out the one intended for himself. Half the time it is almost impossible to read the direction on these foreign letters, and it seems as if there must be a good deal of chance in their delivery.

A GLANCE AT THE CHICAGO POST-OFFICE.

The letters and postal cards are assorted, and the stamps cancelled on the first floor, but the post-office building, which occupies a whole block, has underneath it a large basement, where the most important workings of the post-office can be seen. In the western side of the building are two large chutes or slides for the reception of the mail; one for newspapers and regular publications, and the other for books, papers, and packages of merchandise. Every week, about 400 tons of mail matter slide down the chutes. This is taken care of by a force of 69 men, 10 of whom are constantly at work cancelling the stamps. When a load is dumped into the 2nd. class chute, which takes newspapers sent by publishers, it glides down the boards, and lands upon large scales, where the weight is recorded. Men load this upon trucks, and cart it to the clerks who separate the mail. The newspapers and merchandise packages, after they come down the chute, are stacked up in the stamping room. This room contains a number of large tables, and is separated from the rest of the basement by a heavy wire grating. As the stamps are cancelled, the mail is dropped into bags, which when filled, are taken into the distributing department.

One can scarcely conceive the great diversity of this merchandise mail. Everything imaginable, from a piece of an old door key to a base drum, is handled in this department. Old door hinges, pieces of stoves, grates, screws, banjos, overcoats, old socks, pieces of sewing machines, pictures frames, and feather pillows, are a few of the articles which are daily handled.

One firm sends every day a two-horse wagon-load of catalogues and general merchandise, most of which goes to towns where there is no post-office. A woman once purchased a seal skin cloak, and wished it sent to a small town out west. As there was no express office in the town, and freight transportation is not a safe way of forwarding seal skin cloaks, it was sent to a seamstress, who ripped the back seam, and made the cloak into two packages, each weighing about 3 pounds, and these packages were mailed. A large bicycle was recently taken apart, and sent in pieces through the mail, with the exception of the two heaviest bars which weighed a little more than four pounds.

On the floor of the basement are distributing cases arranged in convenient order. These cases are about 18 feet square, and are made of one inch gas pipe. Each case is divided into 3 or 4 sections containing 18 mail bags apiece, hung mouth upward in their respective places upon four small hooks. The distributor stands upon a platform in front of the case, and takes from his helper the mail which he has arranged with the addresses all one way. One sees a regular shower of mail as each piece travels through the air from the hand of the distributor to its respective bag. One old man, who has been in the employ of the postal service for over 38 years, is Mr. J. G. Kerr. He has charge of the most difficult distributing case in the office; that for Ohio, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Kentucky, Indiana, Tennessee, Maryland and the District of Columbia. He must remember the names of 13,000 offices, and the quickest and most direct route over which each piece can be sent.

POST-OFFICE NAMES.—ODD COGNOMENS BESTOWED UPON SOME OFFICES.

Naming a post-office, says the *Washington Post*, is like naming a child—there is no accounting for the taste displayed in the name selected. Usually the post-office is named after the town, and when the town is started some enterprising citizen gets in his deadly work and the town is named after him. Others take their names from surroundings and often from incidents which happened when the site was first selected. Some are good, others bad; some long and some short, but there seems to be a general disregard of the proprieties in the selection of names. For instance, Happy Camp is the name of a newly created post-office in California, and the probabilities are that the inhabitants are constantly fighting, and the only person who is happy is the undertaker, who is growing wealthy. Mountain View is more than likely to be the name of a village at the bottom of a 200-foot hill than to be near a mountain, while Marble Cliff is very remote from a marble quarry.

Passing events also help decide the names of places, and with the Johnstown horror fresh in the public mind, many smaller towns will select that name to emphasize the establishment of the place.

Peace and Cain are two villages where post-offices have been established in Alabama, while Rat, Rye, and Urbanity have been discontinued. Sassafras is the name of a spicy Arkansas village, while people who desire to go to a new postal station in Alaska will have to have their letters addressed to Bel-

kofsky. California has a choice collection of new names. Bitter Water, Calabasa, Orosi, and Simiopolis, make a splendid quartet. Tourtelotte and Bovina are Colorado offices. Dakota, as becomes a newly admitted State, is selecting names for its new offices from among those who advocated its admission, and is getting rid of its old territorial names, reminiscent as they were with the names bestowed by cow-punchers, whose idea of the ridiculous was very keen.

The warm climate of Georgia boasts of an Arctic town, while Sinker is the name of a village in Idaho.

The people of Illinois were so glad to get new postal facilities that they did not stop to complete the names, and sent them out as Lis and Mac. Nail and Cheek are two villages in the Indian Territory. Fritz, Snider, and McBrayer represent the ruling population in three Kentucky places. China is located in Michigan, and Minnesota boasts of its short Line Park. Missouri contains Last and Clio. Raten is in Nebraska, while Redstone takes its name from the granite hills of New Hampshire. New York is provided with a Best, an Echo, and a Jayville. Stem and Wharf are the names of two post-offices in North Carolina, and Scrub, Ego, and Twin have Ohio written after them on envelopes.

Ale and Joy, while both are in Oregon, are not in the same county, and there is no connection between the two. Peach Tree, Early, Orphan's Home, and Venus are in Texas. Exit and Joe are in the neighboring State of Virginia, and Washington Territory has a newly created small post-office called

Nickle, while Fossil and Shell complete the list for Wyoming.

A DEMOCRATIC POSTMASTER'S GOOD BY.—AN ILLINOIS EDITOR'S VIEW OF POLITICS EXPRESSED IN A LETTER OF RESIGNATION.

The following document has been received from the editor-postmaster at Mount Carmel, Illinois.

MOUNT CARMEL, ILL., June 7, 1889.

To Hon. B. Harrison, President, etc.

SIR—By the grace of God and Grover Cleveland I am postmaster at Mount Carmel. My official term will expire January 20, 1890. In addition to editing the mails of this city I am also the editor of the Mount Carmel *Register*, a live, local, democratic newspaper, established in 1839, and published at \$1.25 a year, cash in advance; a discount of 20 per cent to ministers and presidents.

While the office has agreed with me, and I have in the main agreed with the office, and while I might reasonably entertain the hope of holding on for eight months longer, yet I feel it my duty to tender you my resignation.

Being a democrat, I have preached that "to the victors belong the spoils." I feel disposed to practice that which I preach.

Your immediate predecessor hoped to build up his party by keeping the opposition in office. You are probably aware, if you are at all familiar with the vocabulary of true and trite sayings, that his name is Dennis.

I am moved further to tender you my resignation because of the anxiety of a barnyard full of patriots to succeed me. I believe that a tariff is a tax. They do not. Therefore they are of your own kith and kindred, and he who provides not for his own household is worse than an infidel. I am told that you are not built that way.

But to resume the thread of my discourse: The boys who are anxious to be my successor are very hungry; they have been feeding on shucks and icicles for four long, weary years; the official calf is fat, and they yearn to taste its tender joints. They fought (among themselves), bled (at the nose), and are willing to die for the g. o. p. When I asserted that you were the Chinaman's candidate and ate rat-tail soup with chopsticks they swore by Dudley and Foster that it was a campaign canard and threatened to detail blocks of five to fry the fat out of me. Fortunately for me their threats were never carried into execution. They carried torches, drank with the coons, sang "Grandpa's hat will just fit Benny," and did divers and many foolish things, none of which would they have been guilty of doing had they not scented an aroma of post-office on the crisp

morning air. And the pæans of praise which they sounded when it became evident that you "had got there, Eli," will never be a Sahara in my memory.

For these and other reasons, unnecessary to mention, I tender you my resignation, with the hope that my successor will be animated by a similar spirit in 1893. If he is, your democratic successor will be spared the painful necessity of "turning the rascal out."

I am respectfully yours,

FRANK W. HAVILL, P. M.

N. B.—I would rather be right than be postmaster.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHAPTER OF ERRORS.

Queer Mistakes Made by an Army of Letter Writers.—The Odd Address on Mr. Smith's Letter.—Mr. Muggefeldt Calls His Brother a Fool.—An Interview with a Chicago Official.—Bankers and Business Men Make the Most Mistakes.—How Their Errors are Rectified.—The Chinese are Poor Penmen.—What "Nidibbonavegna" Meant.—Sometimes an Interpreter is Called In.

Just imagine, Mr. Smith, receiving a letter addressed on the envelope in bold, plain writing, in the following manner :

MR. JOHN H. SMITH.
Druggist and Stationer.
1785 Clark street,
Chicago, U. S. A.
Prescriptions carefully made up.
Fine Cigars,
All Periodicals and Newspapers.
Telephone No. 6782.

wrote a Chicago *Herald* reporter. You will notice that every inch of space has been utilized, and that every detail of trade which you desire to specially impress on a forgetful public has been unfailingly copied on the address. The letter-carrier in delivering the missive smiles. You, too, have to smile. You

see from the postage stamp and the post-office imprint that the letter comes from Ireland. The address is the exact copy of one of your business cards, which you some time ago, in order to insure a correct address, sent to an old and unsophisticated uncle in County Wicklow. And you see that the old uncle has been as careful as he could in addressing you. Mr. Smith's next door neighbor, Wilhelm H. A. Muggefeldt, simultaneously receives a letter from his brother in Germany. The envelope bears the following inscription :

An	"Old Reliable."
Mr. Wilhelm H. A. Muggefeldt, Esq.	
Fine Liquors, Wines und Bier.	
Imported und Domestique.	
Family Trade solicited.	Cigars und Tobackos.
Orders promptly attended to.	
"The Sharp Corner."	
Live und	1787 Clark St.,
Let Live.	Chickago, Amerika.

This, as you will perceive, is an exact copy, with some orthographical changes, of another business card. Like his neighbor, Mr. Muggefeldt smiles a ghastly smile, and five minutes later he may be heard saying to his wife :

"Katreena, mine vife, dot is doo funny mit dose ledders. Mine brudder in Tchermany ish one phool."

"Yaw, dot ish so, Wilhelm."

If Mr. Muggefeldt could, however, see the pile of foreign letters daily arriving in Chicago with addresses the exact counterpart of the above, he might hold a little better opinion of his brother. The good souls over there on the wrong side of the Atlantic merely go to the other extreme—they are too

careful in addressing letters ; while over here people, as a whole, are too careless in doing so.

No better illustration of this fact can be found than by interviewing E. J. Rook, at the Chicago post-office. That gentleman is foreman of the city distribution and also chief of the directory department, with four clerks to attend to nothing but rectifying careless letter-writers' mistakes and oversights and in disciphering illegible chirography. What a big job that is no one has any idea who has not taken pains to find out. The daily average number of letters which get into the hands of this small corps of clerks because of having been misdirected is alone about 1,000. The most frequent mistake is made in writing the wrong city down on the address. Instead of Milwaukee, New York, St. Louis, Cleveland, Pittsburg, Cincinnati, Detroit, St. Paul, etc., the letter bears the word "Chicago," and often, too, the reverse mistake is made. Just from one day's mail the writer picked out at random the following misdirected ones :

Wilson Godfrey, Wall street, city, instead of New York. Written by Greenlee Bros. & Co., Chicago.

Mathews, Blum & Vaughn, 85 Leonard street, Chicago, instead of New York. Written by Union National Bank, LaCrosse, Wis.

Jones, McDuffe & Stanton, corner Federal and Franklin, Chicago, instead of Boston, Mass. Written by Kirby, Carpenter & Co., Menominee, Mich.

Montgomery & Co., 104 Fulton street, city, instead of New York. Written by Keene Bros., 167 South Clark street, Chicago.

L. E. Johnson, Cincinnati *Enquirer* office, Chicago, instead of Cincinnati. Written by Whitaker & Jordan, Washington, D. C.

"I suppose a great many of these people who so frequently misdirect letters raise the old Nick when they find there is a botch, and blame the postal offi-

cial for delay or miscarriage," said Mr. Rook, hurrying the huge pile of letters, whose addresses had just been rectified, off on their intended destination. "The public is always blaming the post-office and everybody is always willing to lift up his good right hand to the azure dome and swear by the great hornspoon that he never made a mistake in addressing a letter, and is not liable to do so at any time. Yet we here can tell a different tale. As a general thing I must say that mistakes of business houses are more frequent and less excusable than by poor and badly educated people. And that is true, even taking into consideration the difference in proportion to the bulk of mail from each. Business houses and business men of all kinds are awfully careless in addressing letters. Why the other day a St. Louis bank sent us a letter to Chicago, intended for a firm but five doors distant from the bank itself, and the very next day a big printing house in the same city made an even worse error. And such mistakes occur by the hundreds every day. Yesterday, for instance, a lawyer named Baxter Foster sent us five letters, all of them directed 'Chicago,' and all of them intended for some outside city. The banks, though, are the worst of all. They will pick up printed envelopes with 'Chicago' on them and then address them to the Chase National Bank (which happens to be in New York) or to the Flour National Bank (in Rochester), or to the Second National Bank of St. Louis, for instance. When the mistake is discovered before the mail leaves Chicago, there is no trouble.

We have to carry the register of all the principal banks of the country in our heads."

"And how are the misdirections on other letters rectified?"

"By means of the street guide first, which is furnished us by the Department, and which contains the name and location of every street in every city in the United States. Then, after tracing the street, we take the directory of the city in question and find the name and correct address and forward it there. If we find the same street names in several cities, we hunt through the various directories until the right city with the right address is found. We have for our use the latest directories of some thirty-five cities in the Union, comprising every town of about 100,000 or over. Then, another mistake we have to constantly correct is that people persist in addressing a party living at Fifty-ninth and State, for instance, as living in Chicago. Now, the city delivery only extends up to Fifty-sixth on the South Side, and all of those letters marked 'City' and running up to One Hundredth street have to be addressed anew, and 'Englewood,' etc., put on them. We have the same trouble with letters meant for the extreme ends of the West and North Sides. The last street we deliver on the West Side is Crawford avenue, or Fortieth street, and yet people constantly mark letters for Forty-second and Harrison or Forty-eighth and Madison, 'City,' so that we mark them afresh with 'Central Park,' 'Moreland,' etc., and they have to go there by mail. It's the same with Gross Park and other suburbs on the North Side, which get

their mail by railroad, as other outside towns. Still another trouble we have to contend with are the abbreviations which many people, too lazy to put the name of the addressee on, indulge in. Commission houses are the worst of all in this respect. What could you make of such an address as this, for instance?" And Mr. Rook showed one couched in these mystic signs :

P. B. W. & Co., 1849.

Which meant, strange to say, P. B. Weare & Co.
Another one reading :

G. L. & S., 627.

Which stood for G. Lasher & Son.

"We have to know all these firms and then guess which one it is meant for. They use stencils, and the stencil puts merely the initials and the stencil number on. All sorts of other firms are addressed in a similar way, many only by initials, like "R., M. & F.," which is 'short-hand' for Reid, Murdoch & Fischer. All these, and many other things, we have to guess, and we couldn't do it if we didn't have long years' practice at it."

"How about the difficulty of illegible hand-writings?"

"Well, that is, generally speaking, not as bad as might be expected, especially in a cosmopolitan city like Chicago, which can boast of all sorts of national handwritings. Long practice has skilled our eyesight

and gift of distinction so that we but rarely have difficulty in deciphering any style of writing. In my twenty years' experience I think I remember only two or three occasions where I was unable to make the writing out. Judged by nationalities the Chinese are by all odds the worst penmen—that is, of our style of writing. You'd die laughing if you could see sometimes the chirography some of these almond-eyed gentlemen indulge in. The Italians come next as illegible writers, and then some of the Scandinavians and a few of the Germans who affect German script, and get off some very bold figures with the pen. The Americans are, that goes without saying, the plainest and most distinct writers. But even among them there are a good many who affect such peculiarities of hand writing as puzzle us not a little. Especially what's called the 'backhanded' ones—it may look pretty enough, but the characters all run into each other and make the effect of blurring the whole. It takes study to decipher this style of writing, and you often have to twist the letter and turn it sideways and upside down to get any sense to it."

"And don't the foreign letters give your department much trouble?"

"Well, yes—some. But we get a great deal of fun out of some of those letters, too. The Italians, for instance, will often write down for their correspondents in Italy the names of streets, such as they sound to them, and, of course, they do not know the correct spelling. Thus, a fruit peddler recently got a letter addressed :

MARISI PASQUALE.
 Quinzi.
 Nidibbonavegna.

Which meant :

PASCAL MARISI.
 Kinzie near
 Dearborn avenue.

“ Still, we don't have so much trouble with Italian letters, for the majority of them are wise enough to get them sent in a bunch to one place on Clark, between Polk and Taylor streets, a sort of Italian Bank, and everybody who knows enough to put Italian Bank, Chicago, on the envelope, is sure to have the letter delivered all right. Then, too, they don't write or receive many letters. We sometimes have to wrestle with Chinese letters, but we get an interpreter for that.”

CHAPTER XIX.

POST-OFFICE SAVINGS BANKS, LIFE INSURANCE AND TELEGRAPHY.

The Benefits of Post-office Savings Banks.—Thought of in 1807.—The System of to-day in Great Britain.—Effect upon the Old Banks.—Advantages offered the Opulent Depositor.—Opposition from Banks.—In other Countries.—The United States has talked about them.—Post-office Life Insurance and Annuities.—Annuity Business.—Life Insurance Business.—The Postal Telegraph.—Why the United States should own Telegraph Lines.

THE BENEFITS OF POST-OFFICE SAVINGS BANKS.

Post-office Savings Banks have been such a great success wherever introduced, that it is a matter for surprise that they have not been adopted in the United States. It is a system of banking established

by the government for the simple purpose of benefiting people with small incomes, affording them the utmost facility for depositing and withdrawing money, with the fullest security which government credit can give. There are now nearly 9,000 of these post-office savings banks in the United Kingdom, and they have undoubtedly done much to promote habits of thrift and economy among the British working people. Many communities are far removed from private savings banks, and before the deposit can be made, the sum of money intended for deposit, has gone some other road, and there is no snug penny put by for a rainy day. Where banks are numerous and accessible, there is too often the glaring fault of poor management and dishonest officers, ending in a disaster which sweeps away sums representing the labor and struggles of a life time. These two readily admitted facts can leave no doubt in any mind of the need of a system of post-office savings banks in every civilized country.

THOUGHT OF IN 1807.

Great Britain was not only the first in adopting the postage stamp, but it is to her sound minded government officials that millions of people owe the benefits derived from post-office savings banks. A Mr. Whitbread suggested, in a parliamentary speech in 1807, that the machinery of the post-office could be admirably adapted for receiving the savings of the people, but it took more than fifty years for this skeleton thought to clothe itself with flesh. Mr. Chetwynd, an official in the money order department of the post-office in 1860, proposed to the postmas-

ter general that "Every money order office should receive and pay money on account of the Central Government savings bank, the depositor being furnished with a pass book for entries to be made at the office, and that receipts for deposits should be sent direct from the central office to the depositor." Before the act under which the bank was constituted, was passed, in 1861, Mr. Chetwynd's scheme was changed in various ways.

THE SYSTEM OF TO-DAY IN GREAT BRITAIN.

From the first, the post-office savings banks have been entirely self-supporting. The rate of interest upon deposits has never been over 2 1-2 per cent a year, and the difference between this rate and that upon investments made through the commissioner for the reduction of the national debt, has not only paid all expenses, but given a considerable surplus. It is plain to see, that notwithstanding the greater facilities and security afforded depositors, it is possible to transact the business at a less expense than in regularly established savings banks, because the doors are always open for mailing purposes, and the chief expense is borne by the carrying department of the post-office. The most important of the regulations under which deposits are received, are as follows: Deposits from 1 shilling up to £30 are received, not to exceed £150 in a single year. The total amount to the credit of any one person, including interest, must not exceed £200. Minors and women may be depositors as well as men. Friendly societies, bank companies, etc., are also admitted to the benefits of this plan. Every depositor is re-

quired to make a declaration that he is not directly or indirectly entitled to any deposit in any other savings bank, nor in any other account in the post-office savings bank. Deposit books are supplied free of charge, and all the letters addressed to the Savings Bank department are carried free of postage. When a deposit is made in a post-office savings bank, the depositor must have it properly entered in his deposit book, and will receive by mail within four days after making the deposit, a receipt from the Savings Bank department. All books are to be sent yearly to the postmaster general for the entry of interest. When a depositor wishes to withdraw any sum, he can obtain from any post-office savings bank, a form of notice of withdrawal, which he is to fill up, and forward by mail free of charge to the above department, in return for which he will receive an order payable at any post-office savings bank named by him. In this way every possible convenience for withdrawing money is afforded to the depositor. All post-office employees are bound to secrecy as to the depositor's account, which has led many working men to avail themselves of these banks, who otherwise would not have saved money for fear that their employers might find out that it did not take all their wages to pay for the necessaries of life. Interest is only paid on deposits of a pound and multiples of a pound. Another feature of this plan which has done much to increase its popularity, is the issuing of blank sheets, which, when filled up with one shilling's worth of unused postage stamps, are received as deposits. This practically does

away with the regulation that the smallest deposit shall be one shilling, and a child who has a half penny can buy a stamp and start his sheet, and thus have a bank account. This idea has been adopted in some of the Children's Aid associations in the United States with very satisfactory results. The following table shows that post-office savings banks have been a success in Great Britain: Total deposits including interest: 1863, £3,376,818; 1866, £6,626,400; 1871, £17,025,404; 1876, £26,796,550; 1881, £36,194,495; 1886, £50,874,334.

EFFECT UPON THE OLD BANKS.

The old savings banks could not retain their popularity in the face of the improved facilities and greater security offered by the post-office savings banks, and in less than ten years after the passage of the act establishing this new system, the old-fashioned banks had decreased in numbers from 638 to 496; in depositors, from 1,586,000 to 1,385,000; and in capital, from 41,000,000 sterling to 38,000,000, while the post-office savings banks had grown from nothing to 4082 in number, with 1,183,000 depositors. Since 1870, the business of the post-office savings banks has grown rapidly, as shown in the foregoing table, while the old banks have just about held their own on account of paying a little higher rate of interest.

ADVANTAGES OFFERED THE OPULENT DEPOSITOR.

In order that no poor boy might be deterred from obtaining a sheet for his half-penny, for fear that when his deposit amounted to £200 he could get no

interest upon it, arrangements were made for the investment of sums in government stocks through the post-office banks. A depositor can now invest any sum not less than £10 in any of the British government stocks without any further trouble than to forward an application through a bank, accompanying this with his deposit book. The investment will then be made for him at the following charge for brokerage: On stock not exceeding £25, 9 pence; £25 to £50, 1 shilling 3 pence; £50 to £75, 1 shilling 9 pence; £75 to £100, 2 shillings 3 pence. The investment is made at the current price of the day on which the application is received at the head office, and a certificate for the stock is sent at once by mail to the depositor. The stock will stand in his name on the books of the post-office savings bank department, and the dividends will be credited to his account as they become due. The amount invested in this manner in any one year must not exceed £100, and the whole amount to the credit of any one depositor must not exceed £300. The commission on the sale of stock is the same as that charged for the purchase. If any one wishes to control the interest himself instead of having it credited on his post-office savings bank book, he can apply to the central office for a bank certificate with dividend coupons attached, and then be able to draw the interest himself.

OPPOSITION FROM BANKS.

When the postmaster-general proposed to raise the limit of deposits, a great outcry went out from the banks of the United Kingdom, and well-founded

charges that it was not policy for the government to dabble in trade banking, caused the abandonment of this idea. If the limit had been raised, undoubtedly a different class of depositors would have used these banks, and at times of great speculation, there would be considerable danger of the department being called upon to pay immense sums of money which would be liable to cause the government quite a loss. It is generally conceded that the post-office savings banks, under the present regulations, do not interfere to any great extent with regular banking institutions, for they draw a class of business which, if it went to regular banks, could not be taken at a profit; and it is undoubtedly true that they have done great things in the encouragement of habits of thrift among the poorer people.

IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

The English colonies and most of the European countries, seeing the great benefits resulting from this system, made similar provisions, although many pay higher rates of interest, and allow larger deposits. In Canada they were established in 1868, and the deposits in 1880 amounted to \$3,946,000; in 1884, to \$13,245,900 with 66,682 depositors. Accounts are kept at the head office in Ottawa, where daily reports are received from each postmaster. Among the depositors in 1884 were 10,500 single women with deposits of over \$1,000,000. In Italy postal savings banks were established February 29, 1876, and at present, all post-offices in that country, receive and pay out as banks. The French system went into operation December 31, 1883,

and bids fair to make the greatest success of any. The Austrian government opened post-office savings banks January 12, 1883, while Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Norway soon followed the lead of their neighbors in taking care of the surplus earnings of their people.

THE UNITED STATES HAS TALKED ABOUT THEM.

Many efforts have been made in this country to establish post-office savings banks, but thus far without success. Mr. Creswell, while postmaster general, in 1871, recommended their adoption, and in his annual report of two years later, gave the matter further attention. Ex-Postmaster General Thomas L. James thought highly of this plan, as is evidenced by the following: "It is my earnest conviction that a system of this description, if adopted, would do more than almost any other measure of public improvement for the benefit of the working people of the United States." Many bills have been brought before Congress to procure the necessary legislation for this purpose. A bill introduced by Mr. Lacy, which was strongly recommended and endorsed by the advocates of this measure, provided that "None but money order offices should receive deposits, that no single deposit should be less than 10 cents or more than \$100, that no one person should deposit more than \$100 within 30 days, or have at any time more than \$500 to his credit, and that interest at 2 per cent should be paid on all sums over \$3, beginning the first of the month following the deposit, and stopping the last of the

month preceding the withdrawal." Though as yet all efforts have been unavailing, post-office savings banks will undoubtedly be established in the United States in the near future.

POST-OFFICE LIFE INSURANCE AND ANNUITIES.

In this country, post-office savings banks and the postal telegraph have been discussed so much, that they are comparatively familiar words, though little has been said about another branch of the British post-office—life insurance and annuity. There are very few aside from those who have made a specialty of postal reforms, who know that the British post-office department not only carries letters, papers, and express parcels, and offers facilities for saving surplus earnings, but also does a fair life insurance and annuity business. This started in 1865, with the same object as the post-office savings banks; that is, the promotion of thrift. Life insurance was offered to the people in sums not to exceed £100, and annuities not exceeding £50. This branch of the department, however, has not been such a complete success as the savings banks, but the following tables show a fair business :

ANNUITY BUSINESS:

Number of annuities granted in 1887, 1002; annual amount of same in 1887, £20,927; cash received in purchase of same £243,895. Number of annuities in force, 10,913; annual amount of same £194,829.

LIFE INSURANCE BUSINESS.

Number of new policies in 1887, 585; amount of new insurance in 1887, £36,168. Number of policies

in force, 5,859; amount of insurance in force, £447,310.

THE POSTAL TELEGRAPH.

In 1867 the English government decided upon the bold and socialistic step of gaining possession of all lines of telegraph in the kingdom, and combining this means of communication with the other branches of the post-office business. In 1880, for the first time since the acquirement of the telegraph, have the receipts been sufficient to pay the interest on the capital, and leave a surplus.

Previous to the transfer of the telegraph to the British government, its use was considerably restricted, owing to high charges and inaccuracy; besides, the companies showed no desire whatever to improve the system. The government has developed the telegraph business in a wonderful manner, and now nearly 7,000,000 messages are sent each year through about 6,000 offices.

The idea of employing women in the postal telegraph service was for a time an experiment and a riddle, but the experiment has been successful, and the riddle completely solved. At the close of 1880, there were nearly a thousand female telegraphers in London, Edinburgh and Dublin, and as many more in other parts of the country, while in the different branches of the department, female clerks had become a settled fact.

WHY THE UNITED STATES SHOULD OWN TELEGRAPH LINES.

In an article in the *North American Review*, Prof. Richard T. Ely, of John Hopkins university, argues

strongly in favor of government control of the telegraph system, and says: "I believe no assertion is safer than the prediction that the purchase of telegraph lines would improve our civil service immediately, and soon lead to measures which would diminish the 'patronage' of elected office holders, such as senators, representatives, president. I think also that the wire-pullers appreciate this. There is not one of the worst class of 'spoils' politicians who does not oppose an extension of the business of government. The shrewdest of them must see that to make government an important business agency will mean death to 'practical politics.' In conclusion, we must ask the testimony of experience, and this in all countries where a government telegraph has been tried, is unanimous in favor of public telegraph service. In none of these countries would the people even consider the subject of replacing public telegraphs by private telegraphs, and everywhere the experience of the United States is regarded as a warning against private telegraph companies. England's experience is instructive. Private companies were there tried until they proved to be intolerable; then they were purchased. Elsewhere in Europe the telegraph was from the start a public institution, and this is the result; while the estimated cost of telegraphs in all other states in Europe is 282,000,000 francs, the estimated cost to England of her telegraphs is 272,000,000 francs; in other words, owing to unsuccessful attempts to secure a good private telegraph system, England paid nearly as much for her telegraphs as all the other countries in Europe put together."

CHAPTER X.

ACROSS THE CONTINENT WITH THE U. S. MAIL.

(In the Spring of 1860.)

A Thrilling Account of Uncle Dud's Overland Trip, as told by Himself.—A Brave Man's Dangerous Trip.—“He is the man I want.”—The Overland Mail Company's Oath.—Colt's Pistols and a Sharp's Rifle for Traveling Companions.—The Rough and Tumble of California Traveling.—Rearing Kicking, Plunging, Wild Mustangs for Coach Horses.—An Indian Expedition.—Shooting Buffaloes.—Once more in Civilization.—The End of a Twenty-three Days' Trip, Covering nearly Four Thousand miles.

You ask me why I, a merchant of Boston, was in California, and how I came to make this dangerous and fearful trip. I will tell you :

In the Fall of '59 I was selling goods to a favorite customer—now put yourself in my place and you shall have it—while with this gentleman I heard the steps of one of Boston's great “I am's” (if money makes one great) behind me.

I went to him and he asked me if I was well, and if my family was well, and if he should say to me, that he wished to use my brains for six months to a year thousands of miles away if I would serve him ; I told him if I was competent to do so, I would go. “Very well,” he said, “there is a hack at the side-door ; get all your private matters and papers arranged, bid your family good-bye, and meet me within an hour at the President's office of the Boston & Albany R. R. Take no baggage, as you will have letters of credit and power to get all you need.” I went to the office, and after receiving my instructions, took my

*The writer of this chapter, who is well known to the literary world under his nom de plume of “*Uncle Dud*,” is still living in Boston. This is the first account ever printed of his thrilling and dangerous trip with the “Overland Mail.”

seat in the train bound for New York. At two the next day a gun fired on board the Steamer Baltic in the New York Harbor, and I was on board, bound for Aspinwall, via Panama R. R. to Panama on the Pacific ocean, to San Francisco, California.

After arriving in San Francisco I presented myself and letters as directed. My business in this country is too long to tell, and would be of no interest to you.

My last trip from San Francisco, found me up the head waters of the Sacramento river. I made up my mind one night while camping with a party of surveyors, that the best thing to do, was to return to Boston as soon as I could do so ; I was lying in my blankets on mother earth at the time, one end of my lariat was around my pony's neck and the other was around my ankle. My guide's mule was picketed near by. I called Tom (my guide) and said—"I want to be in the saddle ready to start at day-break. I am going to leave this valley."

I was glad when we got to Forbestown, you bet. We rode down through Oraville and Marysville to Sacramento City, and on my arrival there I learned that there had been some delay about the steamers at San Francisco, and it was quite uncertain when a steamer would leave there.

I took steamboat to San Francisco. Arriving there in the morning, I went directly to the International Hotel on Jackson Street, and in conversation with the landlord said, "If I could find the right kind of a man to go with, I would go home 'Overland' by the Butterfield route." The agent of the

“Overland Mail Company” was in the office at the time, and heard my remarks. After I went out, he inquired of the landlord who I was, and he told him. He said, “he is the man I want.”

The next morning quite early, as I was crossing the “Plaza” I heard my name called with that peculiar Western prefix—“Ho.” I turned and walking towards him, found it was the mail agent. He said he had heard my conversation the night before and asked me if I meant what I then said. I told him “Yes.” We then went to the office of the “Overland Mail Company” where I was required to take the following oath :—“ You solemnly swear, that you cross the Indian countries at your own risk, and will in no way hold the mail contractors responsible for your safety.” I read the rules of the company and signed them, and was told to be on hand the next morning at eight o’clock.

Having done this I called on my friends and told them of my decision. They said I did not know what I was undertaking, and had I consulted with anyone who had made the trip, would have decided differently. But it was too late to back out if I had wanted to do so—which I had no wish to do. I was in for it, and was bound to go, let the result be what it might. When I told them of my intention to go through without laying over (I had the right to stop over at way-stations three days if I chose to do so), and meant to go through or die, they thought I was a fool, but kindly refrained from putting their thoughts into plain words.

I was on hand the next morning at the required

hour, and my friends were there to give me a good send off. I put on my two Colt's navy pistols with belt, and cartridges, and with a Sharp's rifle in hand, was ready for the start. At the door was a Concord coach with six splendid gray horses. I chose my position, and now we were ready for a start. Are you ready? then "Git." Crack went the whip, round went the wheels and we were off. One of the requirements of the driver was that his horses and mules should go from station to station at their highest rate of speed.

The morning was lovely and we dashed on our way to Thorpe's Station, and on to Redwood and San Jose, where we left our fine Concord coach and still finer horses, and were dumped into a mud wagon (called a thoroughbrace) with our mail bags. Imagine, if you can, what a come down this was for us, both in style and comfort, but this is one of many changes, before the end of our trip.

We were now beginning the rough and tumble of life. We had descended the magnificent valley lying between the foot hills of the Sierras, and the coast range of the Pacific ocean. We drove between five and six hundred miles down south, before steering south-east, through the countries of Santa Clara, Santa Barbara, and San Diego to Los Angeles, which promises to be the vineyard of the world.

In passing through some of these valleys, flowers of every hue meet the eye, and one regrets having to leave them all behind. At some points the rivers are fordable, but where the water is too deep for this, the wagon horses are driven on to the flat boats

and ferried across. In one of these passes we crossed a small stream ninety-four times ; this may seem like a Californian story, but it is true. The stream takes a zigzag course, winding its way along.

The San Fernando Pass is but little wider than the wagon, the bluffs on either side rising from eighty to one hundred and sixty feet. There is a mission at this place, established in 1774 by Spaniards. Oranges grow here as common as apples at home ; we also saw great numbers of horses, sheep and cattle in these valleys, apparently without herders.

We now left the foot of the San Phillippe Mountains to cross the great Mojava Desert, which is one vast plain of sand, surrounded on the east and west by mountains ; not a green thing to be seen for miles.

As we approached Fort Yuma on the Colorado river, we encountered a severe sand storm, which almost hid our horses from sight. We were now on the banks of the Gila in God forsaken Arizona. The whole territory seemed a barren waste, and one could not help wondering why our Government should wish for its possession, enough to pay such an enormous sum for it.

We followed this river on the south bank two hundred and fifty odd miles, where we saw some twenty men digging for gold. One side of this river is a level barren country. Near by, all of the houses were adobe, of the old Spanish style.

Now we were in the home of the Apaches, the worst of all bad Indians ; here the wagon and mails were lowered down over the bluff, the horses were

led down a winding path of over two miles, we following to where the wagon was landed, then off we started over the Oatman Flats. Here are the graves of the Oatman family ; the details of the massacre are familiar to all.

One hundred miles back, we had been told that when we arrived at the Pinto Change, we should see lots of fun, as here we changed and took wild horses for a while. We drove up to the corral without sounding as usual the bugle, and found four white wild mustangs waiting for us. They had to be lassoed and thrown in order to be collared and bridled. I took my seat with the driver, the pole horses were brought and placed in position, the reins given to the driver, a man holding the head of each pony ; two leaders were then brought, and the driver took the reins. During this time they were blindfolded, the word to start was given, the blinders taken from their eyes, and the fun commenced. Such rearing, kicking and plunging, until they kicked themselves into the traces. They had a run of twenty-two miles over a road of flint-bedstone ; all we could do was to hang on for dear life, and see them go—the wheels struck fire at every turn ; it was an exciting ride.

We passed an emigrant family with women and children; they had been on the road for months ; a hard looking set, but happy and in good health. Here we are at Maricopa Wells ; from three to four thousand Indians are here, who take their name from these wells. Farther on, we met a party of volunteers, from an Indian expedition, sent out by the "Overland Mail Company;" they had thirteen scalps

and five prisoners. One fine looking boy of eleven years, they offered to sell for fifty dollars. He told his captors if they would send him back to his home, he would show them mountains of just such stuff as they bought their hay with. These Indians have always been friendly with the whites, and are an industrious people, owning large ranches. The "Overland Mail Company" bought twelve hundred dollars worth of hay and barley from them in '59. They are a tall, athletic race, and intelligent looking.

Now, they told us there is trouble ahead. The Mexicans had driven the Americans out, and at Mesilla they had had a massacre, and five men and one woman were shot. We were delayed here, and stood guard at an adobe house until the U. S. troops arrived from a fort about seven miles distant.

After leaving El Paso, in Chihuahau, we crossed the Brazos river into Texas. We now steered northeast, and were to run through this State about nine hundred miles; through the Comanche country and the Indian Territory, through the tribes of the Sioux, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Cherokee, Fox, Ute and Pinte Indians, to Fort Smith, Arkansas. I am a little ahead with my story. At Camp Stockton we met Captain Carpenter with body guard after some greasers, who had stolen a mule team the day before. The Comanches had also been troublesome all the season; they had shot four men from their wagons between this place and the "Overland Mail Company's" station.

At Phantom Hill, we had an exciting adventure. It was Sunday morning and misty. I was awakened

by the driver's voice and a call for rifles ; in two minutes I was on the run, shooting right and left as fast as I could. We had come upon a herd of buffaloes and succeeded in shooting three and wounding three or four others.

We are now about coming into a civilized country ; arrived at Fort Smith, then over the Boston Mountains to Tipton, then the Western terminus of the railroad from the East. My route then was from Tipton to St. Louis by rail to Chicago and New York.

I have been told that the U. S. Government paid the mail contractors \$600,000 to carry the mail one year, but they failed to do it ; and the government, rather than make a new contract with any other party, agreed to give them one million dollars. The contract then not being a paying thing, was abandoned. The government imported camels to carry the mail across the desert, and that scheme failed. The pony express was a lightning thing, but short-lived.

Well, I have finished, and can truthfully say that to the best of my knowledge, I have traveled behind more horses and mules, in a given number of days, and distance, than any other man living. Having traveled some three thousand eight hundred miles in twenty-three days, without taking my shirt off my back, or my feet out of my boots, and employing from seven to eight hundred horses and mules, eighty-five drivers and conductors, and nearly a hundred wagons.

CHAPTER XI.

THE POST-OFFICE IN OTHER LANDS.

In the United Kingdom.—The British Dead Letter Office.—The Postmaster General Objects to Dead Rats.—Price of English Postal Notes or Postal Orders.—Short History of the English Money Order System.—Cost of Postage in England.—The English Parcel Post.—Postal Business in China.—The Censor in Russia.—In the English Colonies.—The French Method—Statistics of the Postal Service in Other Countries.—The International Postal Union.—Different Countries, Different Laws.

IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.

Appointments are all made through open competition. The number of letters delivered yearly amounts to nearly 2,000,000,000, while postal cards, packages of books, circulars, newspapers, etc., are carried to the extent of another billion every year. The death rate is very low among the employees of the post-offices, not averaging over five in a thousand yearly.

The pressure of Christmas business is tremendous, and the poor postal clerks work overtime, and hardly find a chance to sleep or eat. Christmas week brings millions of letters and packages over and above ordinary correspondence. One year there was about 15 tons of this extra business to dispose of.

The dead letter office of the United Kingdom, like that of the United States, is one where the clerks are obliged to work, over five million letters reaching that department every year, to say nothing of the millions of postal cards, packages and newspapers. The English people seem to be made out of the same common clay as those on this side of the water, and are no less liable to carelessness, for about 30,000 letters are mailed each year without any address

whatever. Then, too, they do not use sufficient care in wrapping their packages. About 30,000 articles reach the dead letter office each year, on account of the fragile covers in which they are enclosed. The postmaster general, in his report of a few years since, says: "It is necessary to appeal to the public to abandon the practice of sending animal matter through the mails: fish, sausages, birds to be stuffed, cream, fruit, salads, live kittens and dead rats, are injurious to the health of the officers of the department, and the mails with which they are transmitted, and it is to be hoped that such articles will no longer be mailed."

The British postal system, on account of the proximity of the towns, and the frequent trains running upon the railroads, is better able than most countries to take care of any unusual amount of mail matter. At Hull, nearly 300,000 circulars, weighing 20 tons, which were issued by a single company, and represented £2380 worth of postage, were taken care of by the department without confusion or delay, in 48 hours.

Under the provisions of the postal orders of 1880, a new system was introduced Jan. 1, providing an inexpensive and easy way of sending small sums of money to different parts of the United Kingdom; and postal orders can now be bought for different amounts, any where from 1 shilling to 20 shillings, at a commission of from $\frac{1}{2}$ pence up to a few shillings.

The postal system is not only self-sustaining, but

gives a surplus, the gross revenue being nearly £10,000,000.

The post-office force of Great Britain now numbers about 100,000.

The money order department of the British post-office started as a part of this branch of the government in 1838, although for about 40 years it had been run by three clerks who worked in the London post-office, as a private enterprise. As soon as the government assumed the charge of this business, and reduced the rates, business picked up, and the money order department assumed large proportions. In 1871, the rates were reduced to 1 penny for orders of 10 shillings and under; but as it was estimated that every money order, issued and paid, cost the department 3 pence, this reduced rate brought a loss, and the rates were raised. The public, however, demanded that they should have service at the old rates, and as money orders could not be issued at the old rate, a system of postal notes was devised. These were afterwards called postal orders. To-day these postal orders are being sold at the rate of £30,000,000 a year. They are an advance over those used in this country, for the postal notes of the United States, while a great convenience, are really no safeguard against loss. The postal orders of England must have the name of the person to whom they are payable inserted by the purchaser, and the person to whom they are payable, must insert the name of the money order office at which he wishes it to be cashed. In addition to this, the purchaser may, if he chooses, cross the order so as to invest it

with all the safeguards of a check. These orders of course diminished the amount of the money order business, but that department still does about £25,000,000 business a year.

The postage stamps, which were also used for revenue, are $\frac{1}{2}$ penny, $1\frac{1}{2}$ pence, 2 pence, $2\frac{1}{2}$ pence, 3 pence, 4 pence, 5 pence, 6 pence, 9 pence, 1 shilling, 2 shillings 6 pence, 5 shillings, 10 shillings, 1 pound. There are special envelopes for registered letters, and four kinds of postal cards. The telegraph tariff is the same for all telegrams in the United Kingdom, no matter what the distance; six pence for twelve words, the address and signer's name to be paid for as words. Each additional word over twelve words costs $\frac{1}{2}$ penny. They are paid for the same as letters, by sticking postage stamps on the blanks which the English call the "Form."

The parcel post in England is more nearly a separate department than in the United States. It was introduced there August 1, 1883, although it had been thoroughly discussed and agitated for many years. The total number of parcels posted during the year amounts to over 26,000,000. Postage is never less than 3 pence, and increases at the rate of $1\frac{1}{2}$ pence per pound to 1 shilling 6 pence. The largest amount of a single package allowed to be sent by mail, is 11 pounds. This system is, as one might say, an express business.

POSTAL BUSINESS IN CHINA.

Each city has a certain number of licensed companies who make a business of receiving and sending letters and small parcels, at charges dependent upon

weight and distance. As the different companies are either joined in partnership, or have very close financial relations with each other, the communication between the different cities is of a most efficient character, considering the materials. So much reliance is placed by the public upon the certainty and safety of this postal system, which goes from one end of China to the other, that large sums of money in paper are freely consigned to the charge of the companies. Instances are rare of this trust being violated. Speed is less of a consideration among the Chinese than in countries where railroads and telegraph make the news of to-day the ancient history of the next week. However, when it is important to get a message quickly between two points, the companies use carrier pigeons, which traverse the distance very quickly.

In Russia, at the beginning of 1886, the number of postal establishments was about 5,000. Most of these offices had one or more mails each day, but there were several hundred with but four a week, about a thousand with only two a week, while two on the East Siberian coast received mail but once a year. The Russian postal department has a very large free list, carrying all the correspondence of the government, and that of many public offices and private institutions without charge. The weight of this free mail matter amounts to almost one-half that of the domestic correspondence. The Censor holds an important place in the Russian postal service, and no book or paper is allowed to come into the Empire until it has been thoroughly scanned by his eagle eye,

which watches over the morals, both political and domestic, of the inhabitants of Russia. The only way a paper published outside of Russia can reach a Russian post-office, is by having twelve copies go through the mails, for the Censor does not think it worth his while to read through one paper for the seditious matter, and will not allow any paper to pass unless there are twelve of the same date.

In Australia and New Zealand, with about 5,000 post-offices, there are about 200,000,000 letters and postal cards, with nearly 100,000,000 packages and newspapers mailed each year. Canada's correspondence amounts to about 75,000,000 letters, 15,000,000 postal cards, and 3,000,000 registered letters each year. She issues something over 500,000 money orders, and has about 7,000 post-offices. The 6,000 post-offices of India take care of 150,000,000 letters, 35,000,000 postal cards, nearly 25,000,000 newspapers, parcels, etc., each year.

The French post-office undertakes not only to deliver to the inhabitants of every city and town, but to every house, cōttage, mill, and factory, where letters are addressed. All letters reaching the great Paris post-office, are brought into a large, well-lighted room, and tossed upon long tables. On one side of these tables are a long row of men, whose sole duty, which does not require any great amount of brain effort, is to arrange the letters so that they all face the same way. When this has been done, the letters are handed to clerks on the opposite side of the tables, who divide them into two classes, one for Paris and the other for the balance of the world.

They are then stamped by a force of cancelling clerks, and those for Paris are taken to a room on the ground floor, while the others go up stairs. A large force of men assort the letters for the carriers, who deliver them to their different addresses in the city. The letters which are going to other parts of France and the outside world, are assorted on the second floor, and when enough letters are found for any one district or district route, to make a square parcel about two feet long by eighteen inches wide and deep, they are wrapped up in brown paper and secured by a strong string wound twenty or thirty times around the parcel. These parcels are sealed by a very ingenious method. A large pot of hard sealing wax is made fluid by heating over an alcohol lamp, the flame of which can be increased or diminished at will. At right angles to the stick which holds the seal, is affixed a stick which the sealer dips into the liquid wax, and as soon as he has transferred a sufficient quantity of the wax to the paper and string, the seal is imprinted by simply turning his wrist.

STATISTICS OF THE POSTAL SERVICE OF OTHER COUNTRIES.

In France the number of letters carried each year is about three quarters of a billion. The gross revenue nearly \$35,000,000, and the net revenue about \$5,000,000. This is taken care of by about 7,000 post-offices.

The gross revenue of the Australian postal department is about \$10,000,000 per year, which pays for carrying over 300,000,000 letters and a large number of parcels, newspapers, etc.

The postal revenue of Hungary is nearly \$5,000,000, and the department carries over 100,000,000 letters. In Germany the net revenue each year is over \$5,000,000. Italy's postal department carries about 300,000,000 letters and postal cards each year.

THE INTERNATIONAL POSTAL UNION.

In June, 1863, delegates from the United States, France, Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Holland, Portugal, Switzerland, Denmark, the Hanseatic towns, and Costa Rica, met in congress, with M. Vandal then Postmaster General of France, as President, to discuss the question of a Postal Union between the different nations of the world. They recommended the optional prepayment of foreign letters, the readjustment of the regulations concerning the international weighing and tax of letters, the reduction of the transit tariff, and important regulations as to changes of routes, and matters relating to the International Money Order system. This laid the foundation for the treaties of 1874 and 1878, and was the first step towards the simplifying of the laws governing postal communications between the nations.

In 1874, at Berne, representatives of 22 nations, whose united population was 350,000,000, met in congress. Many matters were effected, such as a half ounce unit of weight for ordinary letters. The uniform charge of 5 cents for a letter from any one country within the union to any other. Uniform rates for newspapers, etc., and the regulation that, "Each post-office shall retain its own collection, and the bills due for transit shall be estimated only from accounts taken twice in each year." An International

Board was also created which has been supported by contributions from the different countries of the Union. The proceedings of this board are reported in *L'Union Postale*, which is printed in three languages, English, French and German, and appears monthly. At the next convention in Paris, in June, 1878, there were 33 states represented, which had a population of 653,000,000. The last meeting was held in Lisbon in 1885.

DIFFERENT COUNTRIES—DIFFERENT LAWS.

In Great Britain the ownership of a letter while in transit lies in the Queen, as represented by her Postmaster General or Secretary of State, and only on the order of the Secretary of State can a letter be withdrawn. In the United States, however, the sender owns a letter until delivered, and may recall it under proper regulations. India, Belgium, Austria, Hungary, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, and other states, possess the same regulations; but Canada, Italy, Spain, and Greece, rule that a letter belongs to the party to whom it is addressed as soon as it is posted. The Netherlands and France have no fixed law in regard to this, yet a sender may claim its return prior to actual postal dispatch. The different countries differ just as widely in their other laws relating to the postal department.

CHAPTER XII.

HERE AND THERE IN THE POSTAL WORLD.

Before the Use of Postage Stamps.—A Bright New York Boy Tests Uncle Sam's Mail.—The Smallest Post-office in the World.—The Postage Stamp Collection of Germany.—Post-office Statistics of the United States.—What He Wanted.—A Financial Transaction.—Rough on the Chaplain.—Costumes of Mail Carriers in India, Egypt, China, Natal, Etc.—The Fifty Years of Queen Victoria's Reign.—The Pigeon as a Mail Carrier.—They May Send a Letter Free.—The First Carrier Delivery in the United States.—Oxen as Post Horses.—Sending Cows and Servants by Mail.—A "Soft Snap."—The Slow Going Post Boy and the Rapid Mail Coach.—Postal Order of Over Three Hundred Years Ago.—Romance in Old Letters.—Two Old Time Love Letters.—Only Harm, Never Good, can come from Keeping Letters.—"Six Days Shalt Thou Labor."—The Wily Messenger.—The Face at the Window.—Mail Carrier, Katie Reimer.—A Mean Man.—The Mail in Mississippi.—A Floating Post-office.—Some Foolish People.—German Red Tape.—The Poste Restante.—The Commission Came too Late.—A Good Sentiment.—A Boom in Registered Letters.

BEFORE THE USE OF POSTAGE STAMPS.

In England, before the introduction of postage stamps, when cheap prepaid postage was adopted, people rushed to pay postage as they now crowd around the ticket wagon of a circus. Soon after the adoption of cheap prepaid postage, a writer in the Westminster Review gives the following description of a rush to prepay letters: "The great hall was filled full of spectators marshalled in a line by the police to watch the crowds pressing, scuffling and fighting to get first to the window. The president of the inland office with praiseworthy zeal was in all quarters directing the energy of his officers where the pressure was greatest. Formerly one window sufficed to receive letters, but on this evening six windows with two receivers at each were bombarded

by applicants, and as the last quarter of an hour approached and the crowd still thickened, a seventh window was opened, and that none might be turned away, Mr. Bokenham made some other opening and took in letters and money himself. On this evening upwards of three thousand letters had been posted in St. Martins Le Grand between five and six. A witness present on the first night of the penny post described to us a similar scene. When the windows were closed, the mob, delighted at the energy displayed by the officers, gave one cheer for the post-office, and another for Rowland Hill."

A BRIGHT NEW YORK BOY TESTS UNCLE SAM'S MAIL.

In 1887, little Charlie Murtha, an eight-year old school boy, who had his doubts in regard to the trustworthiness of Uncle Sam's mail service, tested it in a curious way. As he told the story to the reporter of the New York Sun, it makes quite interesting reading :

"Papa told me one day when I saw him get a letter, that if a letter was properly directed the mail would carry it to the person to whom it was addressed, no matter where he was on the earth. I had written a letter to myself and put it in the lamp-post box, and the letter carrier gave it to me the next day. But that wasn't much, because any of the fellows could have told the letter carrier who I was. But to get a letter from away off, that would be something. So papa told me to get my geography and pick out a place. I looked over the map and found the little island of Tristan d'Acunha, and papa read in a book about a man on that island named Peter W. Green,

who had served as a pilot to the British ship Challenger, when she was making deep sea soundings in the South Atlantic. That was many years ago, but papa thought that even if Mr. Green wasn't alive, some of his family would be, and that they would open the letter and send me an answer to it. So I wrote this letter :

SEPT. 17, 1887.

“ Mr. Peter Green, Island Tristan d'Acunha, South Atlantic Ocean, via Cape of Good Hope.

“ DEAR SIR:—I learned your name by reading an account of a visit to your island by the ship Challenger, and I write to you to ask if you would give me some particulars of your lonely home in the southern ocean.

“ If this letter should reach you, and you will kindly consent to answer it, so that I will know that the mail can reach you, I will in return send you some photographs of the various places of interest in our part of the globe. Yours respectfully,

CHARLES E. MURTHA.

“ Well, papa,” the boy continued, “ put that in an envelope addressed to Mr. Green, and put in this an envelope addressed to me, Charles E. Murtha, Public School No. 17, Brooklyn, E. D., N. Y. I posted the letter the next day, and last Monday, Sept. 10, just one year lacking one week, I got the envelope back, with a letter in it from Mr. Peter W. Green.”

THE SMALLEST POST-OFFICE IN THE WORLD.

The smallest post-office in the world, and the one which is conducted with the least expense, is located on the uninhabitable rocks of Terre del Fuego. The post-office building is simply a cask on the end of a pole, and passing ships send a boat off to this cask to get letters going their way, and leave there the letters which they may wish sent in an opposite direction.

THE POSTAGE STAMP COLLECTION OF GERMANY.

The Imperial German postal department has instituted at Berlin, a postal museum which contains a very complete collection of all articles relating to the postal service of different countries. The collection of postage stamps is undoubtedly one of the finest in the world. The catalogue alone is a volume of 338 pages, large octavo size. There are some 7,000 postage stamps, about 1,500 stamped envelopes and wrappers, and 1,200 postal cards. This collection is made possible by the provisions of the Universal Postal Union. All the members of the Union exchange any new postage stamps they may issue, so that by this means, as well as by considerable care and research in collecting obsolete issues, the postal department of Germany has brought together this large and valuable collection of postage stamps.

THE POST-OFFICE DEPARTMENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

The last report of the postmaster general, dated July 1st, 1888, shows that the number of post-offices at that time, was over 57,000, and for the last three years they have increased at the rate of 2,000 a year. The money order division, which also includes the business done in postal notes, transmitted nearly \$143,000,000. Revenues have increased to \$52,700,000, an increase of about \$30,000,000 in twenty years, despite the reductions in postage rates. The carefully prepared statistics of this report, show that the rate of expenditure has been lessened. Every branch has been increased in efficiency, fraud and crime have decreased, and the number of complaints has been less than ever before.

WHAT HE WANTED.

In some of the post-offices, the clerks sleep in a room over the office. This was the case with a clerk at a small Vermont village, who had worked for Uncle Sam some years. He found that the people regarded him as the "people's servant," and had no hesitancy in asking him to do up their mail packages and lick the postage stamps. All this was done willingly, but "the last straw which broke the camel's back" was a night experience. When every one was sleeping calmly, and the village was so quiet that the dropping of an ordinary pin would have sounded like a thunderbolt, he was rudely awakened by a pounding at the office door below. Thoughts of mail robbers entered his mind, but he put on his courage and his pantaloons, and went down stairs, opened the door a crack, and in a shivering whisper, said: "What's wanted?" "Got any mail for Jem Smith's folks?" was the reply from a farmer who thought, as he was driving through the town to catch an early train, he might as well "kill two birds with one stone."

A FINANCIAL TRANSACTION.

There was a long line of waiting buyers in front of a stamp window of a city post-office one day. A person at the window handed in a roll of pennies, saying: "A dollar's worth of one's." The clerk pushed the roll back to him with the remark that pennies were not received in payment for such a large amount. The purchaser opened the end of the roll, took out a cent, and said, "A one cent stamp, please." When

he got the stamp, he pushed another penny forward with a request for another stamp. The clerk saw that the pennies were bound to come in, and so thought it best to break the rules.

ROUGH ON THE CHAPLAIN.

During the "late unpleasantness" the chaplain of a certain regiment had to look after the mail. He was annoyed exceedingly by a great number of people who were constantly running to him, and inquiring about the arrival and departure of the mails. One day when his patience was exhausted, he posted a notice outside the tent, which read: "The chaplain does not know when the mail will go." He thought that this would put an end to his trouble, but it was simply the beginning; for one day, when he was absent from the camp, some of the boys played a practical joke upon him. On his return, the reverend postmaster was horrified to see conspicuously written underneath his notice an addition which appeared to be in his own handwriting, so that the notice, as posted, read: "The chaplain does not know when the mail will go. Neither does he care a damn."

COSTUMES OF MAIL CARRIERS IN INDIA, EGYPT, CHINA, NATAL, ETC.

In the Himalayas letters are carried in the end of a cleft stick by swift runners. By the use of the stick the letters can be carried for days and be kept as clean as when started.

The common type of Indian post runner, or "tap-pal wallah," wears a long white coat, blue turban and tight trousers. He now has a bag slung over his shoulder, in which the mail is carried. The car-

riers in tropical countries have a long staff, with iron head, that can be used as a weapon of defense. Little bells are hung on the staff, they frightening away animals and reptiles, and giving notice of the post's approach. The camel mounted messengers in some parts of India and Egypt are among the most picturesque of all carriers. A red uniform is worn, with a large green turban richly embroidered with gold thread. A curved saber in red sheath is hung from the waist. The camels are adorned with gay trappings, and a string of bells notifies people of their coming. A mail bag is carried on each side, with a seat behind the driver for a passenger. The camels are driven at a high rate of speed, eighty miles a day being usually accomplished.

Japan has a well-perfected service. It was not until 1871 that any regular system of posts in charge of the government was established. In less than ten years so much had been accomplished that post-offices of other nations kept up at all open ports were abolished as unnecessary. Japan has now nearly 40,000 miles of mail routes, about 4,000 post-offices, and approaching 10,000 employees. In China, affairs are quite the reverse, the people seeming satisfied to go along in a stagnant kind of way without any government service. The placid Celestials disdain to hurry, and are content with carriers on foot, or paddling along in boats, the pace rarely exceeding twelve miles in twenty-four hours.

Different countries make use of different methods to facilitate the post-carrier's labors. In Natal a light four-horse cart is used. It is not much of a

vehicle for show, but is a prime one for getting along over bad roads. In the mountainous districts of Brazil a two-wheeled wagon drawn by oxen is used for a post-cart. As the roads are terrible trials the wheels are made solid. In Russia some sections have buffalos harnessed to two-wheeled carts, other places have horses abreast, and still other sections use sledges drawn by reindeers or dogs. The latter are used in some parts of Canada, the mail service in the winter between Lake Winnipeg and Selkirk being carried on by dog teams.

THE FIFTY YEARS OF QUEEN VICTORIA'S REIGN.

“The highly improved mode in the means of correspondence during the reign can be summarized in a few sentences. At the beginning, the number of letters were some 80,000,000, now the number of postal cards alone is 172,000,000, while of letters there are 1,403,000,000. In addition the number of telegraphic dispatches exceeds 39,000,000. There are half as many messages forwarded by telegraph now as there were letters fifty years ago, and more than twice as many postal cards. If an equal distribution be made among the population of the respective dates it might be said that whereas at the earlier epoch each person sent three letters and received three, now each sends forty and receives forty, while in addition there is one telegram transmitted per head; yet notwithstanding this the net revenue drawn from the post-office has risen from 1,500,000 pounds in 1837 to nearly 3,000,000 pounds in the present year.”

THE PIGEON AS A MAIL CARRIER.

In the Franco-Prussian war, during the siege of Paris, the pigeon service was the only way by which those within the walls gained news from the outer world. The dispatches were in the first instance photographed on a reduced scale, on thin sheets of paper, the original writing being preserved; but soon an improved system was adopted. The communications were printed in ordinary type and micro-photographed on two thin films of collodion, each pellicle measuring less than two inches by one, and the reproduction of sixteen folio pages of type contained above 3,000 private letters. These pellicles were so light that 50,000 dispatches, weighing less than one gram, were regarded as the weight for one pigeon. In order to insure their safety during transit the films were rolled up tightly and placed in a small quill which was tied longitudinally to one of the tail feathers of the bird. On their arrival in Paris they were thrown by means of an electric lantern on to a screen, copied by clerks, and dispatched to their destination. This method was afterwards improved upon, sensitive paper being substituted for the screen so that the letters were printed at once and distributed. The postage on the pellicles carried by one pigeon amounted to about \$50,000.00. At the present time all the important fortresses in France and Germany have their staff of pigeons.

In Egypt, a postal system was early arranged. In addition to the courier and the horse, messages were transmitted, as they have been in many other countries, by carrier pigeons, a system which the Sultan

brought to great perfection. In the 12th century, the number of pigeons kept in readiness was about 2,000. So highly esteemed was this branch of the public business, that the Sultan alone had the right of taking messages from the pigeons when they arrived.

In the Feejee Islands, where there are no telegraph lines, pigeons are to this day the sole means of letter communication.

THEY MAY SEND LETTERS FREE.

There are but four persons in the United States, other than those holding public office, who are allowed to receive and send mail matter free of postage. These four persons are the widows of the late Presidents Polk, Tyler, Garfield, and Grant. An act of Congress is required to grant this privilege to any one, and it has been so granted to the widows of Presidents since 1836, when the first act was passed conferring the distinction upon Mrs. Dolly P. Madison.

According to the United States Postal Laws and Regulations, which is a compilation of the rules, published for the information and guidance of postmasters and other officials, Mrs. Tyler is not entitled to the benefits of franking mail matter, and it is true that no law has ever been passed in her case. She is, in a sense, a victim of one of those peculiar oversights of Congress which are of frequent occurrence. The Post-office Department, however, appreciating the fact that Mrs. Tyler is in equity entitled to the same privilege which has by law been granted to Mrs. Polk, Mrs. Garfield, and Mrs. Grant, accepts her

frank in lieu of postage and collects nothing upon matter mailed to her address.

There is a rather peculiar fact connected with the case of Mrs. Polk, also. The act granting her the privilege of free postage was passed in 1850. Since that date all laws conferring the franking privilege have been once or twice repealed; the last time in 1873, and no act has since been passed in favor of Mrs. Polk. There is no law on the statute books to-day, therefore, entitling her to the benefit of free postage, but it is allowed her arbitrarily by the department, and the Postal Laws and Regulations name her as one of the persons legally entitled to the benefits of the franking law.

It is not generally known that the law extending the franking privilege to these ladies also provides explicitly that mail matter, including letters, newspapers, and packages addressed to them is exempt from the payment of postage. The only explanation of this somewhat peculiar provision of law is that when Congress passed the first of these private acts it failed to notice that free postage to the senders of mail conferred no sort of benefit upon the persons addressed. Mrs. Polk, for instance, is not benefitted in the slightest degree because some person who wishes to write her a letter is not required to affix a stamp to it. Yet when the laws in favor of all the President's widows who came after Mrs. Polk were passed, the same language was used and stands upon the statute books to-day.

A sort of fatality in the direction of making mistakes seems to have followed the course of law making

on the subject of the franking privilege, and the most stupendous blunder of all that Congress made in the first general act passed has never yet been corrected. This is the failure to provide a penalty for a violation of the law. Although there have been as many as fifty franking-privilege acts passed by Congress since 1879, not one of them provides any penalty for their infringement or evasion. This very singular oversight is a cause of much inconvenience and annoyance to the postal officials, and because of it very few arrests have ever been made, although the use of franks by unauthorized persons and on unfrankable matter is of very frequent occurrence. It would be useless to make arrests, the officials say, when no punishment would follow a conviction.

THE FIRST CARRIER DELIVERY IN THE UNITED STATES.

Free delivery by carriers in the United States was not established until March 3, 1863, although previous to that time, most of the large cities had carriers who made a delivery of letters and collected a voluntary fee of one or two cents on each piece of mail matter delivered.

OXEN AS POST HORSES.

In the reign of Henry VIII. of England, the King appointed a master of the post, Sir Brian Tuke, who made great efforts to bring order out of the hitherto chaotic confusion of the so-called postal system of Great Britain. He had a hard time of it, for the supply of horses was so poor, that post boys had to use oxen and other beasts to reach places of which they had never heard of, by roads they had never traveled before.

SENDING COWS AND SERVANTS BY MAIL.

It is doubtful whether the treasury warrant, which granted the right of sending official correspondence free, ever contemplated sending the bulky personal packages which the officers of the crown sent as official correspondence.

Some of the items which are recorded in the agent's book of the beginning of the last century, are good evidence of the elasticity of the mails, and also the queer shapes which the official correspondence of that day, assumed. For instance: "15 couple of hounds, 2 head servants." "Dr. Crichton carrying with him a cow and divers necessaries." "2 bales of stockings for the use of the Ambassador of the crown of Portugal."

A "SOFT SNAP."

In 1720, Mr. Ralph Allen, of Bath, made a plan of his own for improving the system of cross posts, which was the name designating cross roads, going from the more unimportant towns, and connecting the principal routes. At that time these roads were in a fearful condition, and if the messenger was not robbed, murdered, or lost in the snow-drifts, he stood a good chance of breaking his neck before reaching the end of his route. Mr. Allen obtained a lease of the cross roads for life, keeping the entire revenue, and paying to the government an annual rental of \$6,000. This was what our expressive slang of the present day would call a "soft snap," for the records left at his death showed that he made a clean profit of several million dollars from this cross road scheme.

THE SLOW GOING POST BOY AND THE RAPID MAIL
COACH.

No trace could be found of the government's making any effort to improve upon the old custom of sending letters by mounted messengers until the commencement of the present century. Long after stage coaches had come into use, the mails were still carried by post boys upon horse-back at the rapid rate of three and four miles an hour. The theory of the government was, that the postal system must not only be self-supporting, but also pay a revenue ; and the postmaster general, in carrying out this idea, often declined to send letters by the most direct route, for as the rates were charged by distance, the longer the route the more money the government received. Boys of fourteen years of age wore the ridiculous garb of the post-boy, the hat with a cockade, scarlet coat, blue knee breeches, and white stockings. Each boy carried two capacious letter bags, and he and his mails were mounted on any kind of a beast, the only necessary qualification for entering the government service as post boy's horse being cheapness. Further efforts proved that the more quickly they could be sent the larger the mails would become. When the boys went three or four miles an hour, the correspondence entrusted to them was very small, but when Allen's mail coaches were put on, which went at six miles an hour, the mail matter increased perceptibly, and when the speed of the coaches was increased to eight and even nine miles an hour, the amount of mail was at once increased. This rapid

speed though, did not agree with the passengers. Lord Chancellor Campbell says, that he was warned against traveling in mail coaches on account "of the fearful pace at which they flew, and of an instance recorded to him of a person who had died suddenly of apoplexy on account of the rapidity of the motion."

A POSTAL ORDER OF OVER THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

In July, 1556, the lords of the seal, ordered that "Postes betweene this and the northe should eache of them keepe a booke and make entrye of every letter that he shall receive, the tyme of the deliverie thereof unto his hands with the parties names that shall bring it unto him."

ROMANCE IN OLD LETTERS—THEY SOMETIMES, TOO, THROW LIGHT ON SUPPOSED MISTAKES OF THE PAST.

In these busy days how many people ever find time to rummage out a package of timestained old letters and then yield themselves up to the spell of quietly reading them? inquires a writer in the *Boston Herald*. No; even if going away to the sea shore or the mountains they preferably stow away a novel or two in the valise and trust to these to supply them with all needful romance. And yet there is more romance to be got out of one package of old letters from intimate associates of one's youth than out of half a circulating library of novels. With most men and women of forty or fifty the unstirred memory of the early days of life has grown utterly vague and shadowy. All forgotten with them is how they used to exult and weep and hope and despair—all forgotten how rapturous the wine of youth was, how bitter its dregs

and lees. But now comes the package of old letters to the rescue. Under its enchanting wand the sensations become positively startling as the diorama of the past begins to unroll, and scene after scene breaks in with its old, vivid associations.

The first to be opened is, perhaps, a letter from the long dead, dear old mother. It was written when her boy first left for the boarding school, or to seek his fortune in the world, and, with the rereading of it across the abyss of time, how the heart beats again with the old fears and hopes, the old clinging embrace, the old boyish resolve never to bring grief or shame on such devotion. Next comes a letter from a Damon or Pythias of a far-away schoolmate. "Poor Tom!" the heart sighs before one begins to read, as one recalls how sad a fate in life the unhappy fellow had. But no trace of foreboding in the letter. Tom is the old young Tom of fourteen years. He has just been to a dancing party, where he had a cotillion and the Virginia reel with airy, fairy Mary Phelps. She looked like an angel—Tom's affidavit for it. Her eyes danced with joy, and Tom thought he knew the reason why. Then follows a college letter. It was from the reader's dear, proud sister. She has heard all about her brother's class-day oration. Susan Alcott had written her that it was pronounced a combination of the charm of Cicero, the fire of Demosthenes and the Ganges volume of Burke. Yes, the rejuvenated fellow remembers this was just what he once believed of it himself, and was sure of, when his classmates flocked round him and nearly shook his arms off. "Take a novel to the seashore for food of rom-

ance!" cries the fairly fascinated reader. "Why in this old package of letters there are more starts and surprises, more themes for pathetic reflection, more bursts of golden sunshine and glooms of lowering clouds, than Balzac or Victor Hugo ever packed into the most world famous romance. At least the tears and exultations came closer home to me." And here he hits it! Closer home to him! Here lies the spell of the package of old letters. It reveals one human life at least as a unity of endless variety. It gives the past the distinctness of the present, filling up and making solid ground of the abyss that divided them, The dear, familiar faces, how they crowd round! A meed of gratitude, of congratulation, of sympathy, of pity, for each! Human life, after all, the heart now feels is not the barren thing one is so apt to think it. when surrendered to a single monotonous mood.

Of course there are plenty of shallow people ready to say that it makes them simply sad to read old letters. A great mistake this. Perpetually one lights on subjects of felicitation. Now he is so glad he failed to win the heart of a certain delectable Mary, though once it nearly killed him; now so glad his speech was hissed or his article refused, and so he was put to his trumps to do better. Half his worst failures he sees, in the light of these old letters, to have been his most signal triumphs. Hard at the time these failures; but now, as he looks back at them, they become to him

Like mountain ranges overpassed,
In purple distance fair.

Ah! the glamour of beauty, he reflects, time and distance throw over steep and ragged experiences. Why may not heaven at last turn out to be just such a “reading of old letters?”

TWO OLD-TIME LOVE LETTERS.

In an old book, dated 1820, there is the following very curious love epistle. It affords an admirable play upon words :

“MADAME—Most worthy of admiration! After long consideration and much meditation on the great reputation you possess in the nation, I have a strong inclination to become your relation. On your approbation of the declaration, I shall make preparation to remove my situation to a more convenient station, to profess my admiration, and if such oblation is worthy of observation and can obtain commiseration, it will be an aggrandization beyond all calculation of the joy and exultation of yours,
“SANS DISSIMULATION.”

The following is the still more curious answer :

“SIR—I perused your oration with much deliberation at the great infatuation of your imagination to show such veneration on so slight a foundation. But after examination and much serious contemplation I supposed your animation was the fruit of recreation or had sprung from ostentation to display your education by an odd enumeration, or rather multiplication, of words of the same termination, though of great variation in each respective signification. Now, without disputation, your laborious application in so tedious an occupation deserves commendation, and thinking imitation a sufficient gratification, I am, without hesitation, yours,
“MARY MODERATION.”

ONLY HARM, NEVER GOOD, CAN COME FROM KEEPING LETTERS.

It is trouble, not good, that arises from old letters. A package has fallen into my care to be disposed of as thought best. It contains letters, bills, receipts, some papers of value, and others worthless. In order to sort the chaff from the wheat, they must be carefully examined. Ah, what unthought-of secrets they disclose—family troubles of which the world

never dreamed ; bitter heartaches where we thought all was serene ; love letters, sacred for their time and place, ridiculous now ; a whispered suspicion of slander upon a name we thought was pure as snow, and we are left to wonder whether it is true or false. Old letters. What can they be good for ? Their mission is ended.

“I may like to read them while recovering from an illness,” says some one.

Pshaw ! as if these would be tonic you needed at such a time ! Better far a breath of pure air. We are all prone to brood too much at such times, and need no such help in that direction. Let this plea for the burning of letters be a strong one. Business letters should be filed and labeled. Have a blank book into which to copy such dates or extracts as may be of value in the future for references. This can be done when letters are answered. Then burn them and see the ashes. It is the sorrows instead of the joys, that most letters contain. They are the safety-valve for deep feeling from friend to friend, good in their time, but sometimes worse than useless in the future. Every day brings new experiences. We are constantly changing, and in many cases would be ashamed of our own letters written ten years ago.

Garfield said : “When you pitch your tent let it be among the living, not among the dead.”

“SIX DAYS SHALT THOU LABOR.”

The American Sabbath Union is working hard to prevent Sunday work in the postal department of the

United States, as well as in the military service, in inter-state commerce, and in the District of Columbia and territories where the laws are enforced by the United States government. The leading religious bodies of the country have endorsed the work of the union, and the movement is attracting considerable attention. Postmaster General Wanamaker is deeply interested in the proposed bill to forbid Sunday work in the mail service, and is doing all that he can to promote the reduction of Sunday work by postal employees. No two offices seem to have the same rules in regard to the observance of the Sabbath. Most of the larger offices close during the hours of morning church service, and few of them do more than keep the general delivery open for an hour or two on the Sabbath. Societies have been formed in many of the States, and the organization is pushing this work rapidly. Chicago, the great convention city, will hold a convention of the American Sabbath Union some time in November of 1889. Following are the orders which they believe the postal department ought to make for regulating Sunday work :

1. No post-office to be opened at the usual hours of worship.
2. No postal employees required to be on duty at hours that would take from them the opportunity to attend church.
3. Stamp clerks to be entirely free from Sunday work.
4. Mail bearing special delivery stamp to be uniformly held in the office as other mail, unless personally called for.
5. No mail matter except letters to be stamped or sorted on the Sabbath.
6. Any post-office to be wholly closed on the Sabbath where a majority of the people of legal age petition for such closing.

ADVANTAGE OF THE SPECIAL DELIVERY.

Gentleman (to boy in Madison Square)—Are you the messenger boy who took my note some fifteen minutes ago?

"Yes sir."

"Did you deliver it?"

"No, sir."

"Where is the quarter I gave you?"

"Bought a special delivery stamp and a package of cigarettes; it'll get there quicker, Mister."—[*Life*.

"THE FACE AT THE WINDOW."

"This letter is to my husband," she said as she licked on a stamp at the window in the corridor of the post-office.

"Yes'm."

"Will it go out to-day?"

"Yes'm."

"By first mail?"

"Yes'm."

"He ought to get it day after to-morrow?"

"Yes'm."

"And I ought to have his letter by Saturday?"

"Yes'm."

"It isn't over weight?"

"No'm."

"And if he gets it, and if I get his answer by Saturday, I can write——"

"Please don't obstruct the window, ma'am; there's forty people waiting."

"Oh! there are! That's always the way of it. I can't get a word of information out of this post-office, try as I will. Good day, sir! I'll go across to Canada after this!"—[*Detroit Free Press*.

MAIL CARRIER KATIE REIMER.

Little Katie Reimer of Scio now carries the mail from Atwood to Selden three times each week. The

distance is about forty miles, and the trip is made in a buckboard drawn by one pony. Instances of Kansas women farming with oxen, with mules, with all kinds of teams are many, but we venture that Miss Katie is the only girl carrying mail in the State.

A MEAN MAN.

A Bath man has hit upon a new method of adding to the trials and tribulations of the post-office clerk. He recently mailed a letter with two 1-cent stamps upon it, one in one corner and the other in the other, necessitating two cancelling strokes. Alas! the inhumanity of man.

THE MAIL IN MISSISSIPPI.

“Good mawnin, Boss,” said Uncle John Dixon, walking up to the general delivery window of the post-office in a Mississippi village and taking off his hat. “Say, Boss, has you got any mail fur me?”

After looking through about forty-five letters the postmaster answers in the negative.

One-half hour later.

U. J. D.—“Say! Boss! has you got any mail fur me?”

(No mail has arrived yet.)

P. M.—“No—no mail for you.”

“U. J. D.—“You did’n’ look!”

P. M. —“Been no mail in yet.”

U. J. D.—“Why don’ you look, how does you know dere ain’t nuthin’?”

P. M.—“You were here a half hour ago and no mail has arrived since.”

U. J. D.—“Moughty quar you cawn’t look ; you *never* looks fur cullud folks.”

P. M.—“Go on, now ; when I say there is no mail, there is none.”

U. J. D.—“Dis is depos’ office, ain’t it—*ain’t it?*”

P. M.—“Yes.”

U. J. D.—“Well, I’s e got a right to cum an’ ask fur my mail, I has.”

P. M.—“Mail won’t be in for an hour.”

U. J. D.—“You oughter look.”

(One hour later.)

Uncle John Dixon looms up before the window.

P. M.—“Nothing for you on this mail.”

U. J. D.—“You didn’ look. ’Pears to me you mought look.”

P. M.—(Looks through the Q’s to appease him)—
“Nothing!”

U. J. D.—“Sure dere’s nuthin? Moughty quare! There oughter be a postal card here. Got nuthin’ fur ’Liza Dixon? Mebbe it was sent to hur.”

P. M.—“No ; there’s nothing for Dixon.”

U. J. D.—“You didn’ look. How does you know there’s nuthin’ fur ’Liza. You oughter look.”—*Detroit Free Press.*

A FLOATING POST-OFFICE.

A novel post-office is that established on a steam-boat running on the Clyde, which carries a large number of passengers. All postal work except the money order branch is carried on in this floating post-office, the telegraph messages received being despatched at each place where the boat stops.

SOME FOOLISH PEOPLE.

In England, it was at first the practice to register every letter supposed to contain articles of value. The increase of business led of course to the abandonment of this most worthy plan. Soon numerous complaints of theft arose, and the post-office authorities resumed the practice of registering, diminishing however the amount of such work by charging for the extra trouble. The rate started with one shilling, but was reduced to 6 pence, and afterwards to 4 pence and then to 2 pence. The number of registered letters in one year in the United Kingdom is over 11,000,000, and the people resort to curious devices to save a few pence charged for registering; and they not only take an immense amount of trouble, but risk the loss of valuable articles. A Bank of England note for £20 was once found pinned to the page of a book, addressed to the initials of a lady. A half penny wrapper contained, besides a letter, a bill of sale, and four bank notes.

GERMAN RED TAPE.

Red tape in most of the post-offices on the continent, is carried to an extreme. In Germany, if an American traveller wishes to mail a package, it sometimes takes several days or a week to induce the post-office officials to accept it. A lady, who was seeing the sights of Dresden a year or two ago, wished to return a book which her sister in America had mailed to her. She had heard that the post-office clerks were very strict in regard to the manner in which mail packages were done up, and so to be sure that everything was all right, she wrapped the book in the

same piece of paper in which it had come from the United States, and carried it to the general post-office. Here the clerk took it, asked how much it weighed, what it was, who it was from, where it was going, what it was for, and a few other questions; after which, he returned it to her with the remark that it must be wrapped in impermeable paper, as the Government would not receive such a valuable book in the mails without it was more securely done up. (She had told him, that as it was second hand, she did not care to put any money value upon it.) She then bought her impermeable paper, carefully wrapped it around the book, and went again to the general post-office. After she had been questioned thoroughly, and the clerk had given the book a careful analysis, he told her that in addition to the impermeable paper, the corners must be protected, and that she must wrap them in stiff cloth. She accordingly bought a crash towel, and wound it around the book so as to protect the corners, and as she could not write the address on the towel very well, she pasted a piece of paper upon the package, having the proper address. Now she thought success was sure, but, "There is many a slip betwixt the cup and the lip," especially when one is dealing with a German government official. There was a little more red tape to be gone through with before this much wrapped parcel could reach the United States. The package must be sealed with three seals, and the lady must write the same address upon an envelope as that upon the book, and seal the envelope with three seals, exactly like those she had im-

pressed upon the package. With her envelope in three seals, and book wrapped in impermeable paper and crash towel, she went to the general office for the fourth time, and interviewed the clerk. The clerk was very sorry, but the package could not go in that shape. The paper with the address which she had pasted upon the towel, must be taken off, as it was against the regulations to send a package with any address pasted on. The address was picked off, and written on the towel, and the book again handed to the clerk. This work had been done in the vestibule of the general office. The clerk took the package, looked in the official guide, and said, "There is no such place in the United States as Burlington, Vermont, and consequently we cannot accept this package." Unfortunately in writing "Burlington" upon the crash towel, the ink not flowing freely, she had left a space between the "g" and "t" so that our intelligent German clerk thought the place was Burling-ton, but this was easily fixed with a little ink, and the package was finally accepted by the representative of the German government. So much time had been spent in the office, that it was then past six o'clock, and the great outer doors were closed and locked. Our American friend was not sufficiently ethereal to flit through the key hole, and the German system was such that the doors could not be opened. Finally, after much urging and talking, the clerks permitted her to go through the working department of the office, and let her out through their own entrance door. As she had been so successful in mailing her package, and knew just how

to do it, a friend asked her to mail a package for him, addressed to a place in Russia ; but this must have been addressed in the same way as Burlington, for the postal clerk told her, that although it was wrapped properly, and was accompanied by the envelope with the three seals which corresponded with the three seals upon the package, and she had given him the fullest information in regard to the name of the sender, etc., etc., as there was no such place in his guide book for Russia, the government could not accept it.

POSTE-RESTANTE.

In most countries on the Continent and also in Great Britain, it is nearly as much trouble for a stranger to get his mail, as it would be for an unknown man to get a check cashed in a bank in the United States. The Poste-Restante, as the department is called where the travellers' letters are sent, is open at certain hours of the day, and letters are not given out unless a request is accompanied by a passport or evidence of other identity.

THE COMMISSION CAME TOO LATE.

It is not very often that the appointment clerk works so slowly that the man appointed dies before his commission reaches him, but the commission for the Postmaster at Haughville, Ind., arrived too late to be of any use, as he had been dead for over two months.

A GOOD SENTIMENT.

Postmaster General Wanamaker, in an interview published in the Philadelphia Record, says, "I want

to keep the mail bag open to the latest possible minute, then get it to its destination in the quickest possible time, then get each separate piece of mail to the person for whom it is meant in the quickest possible way."

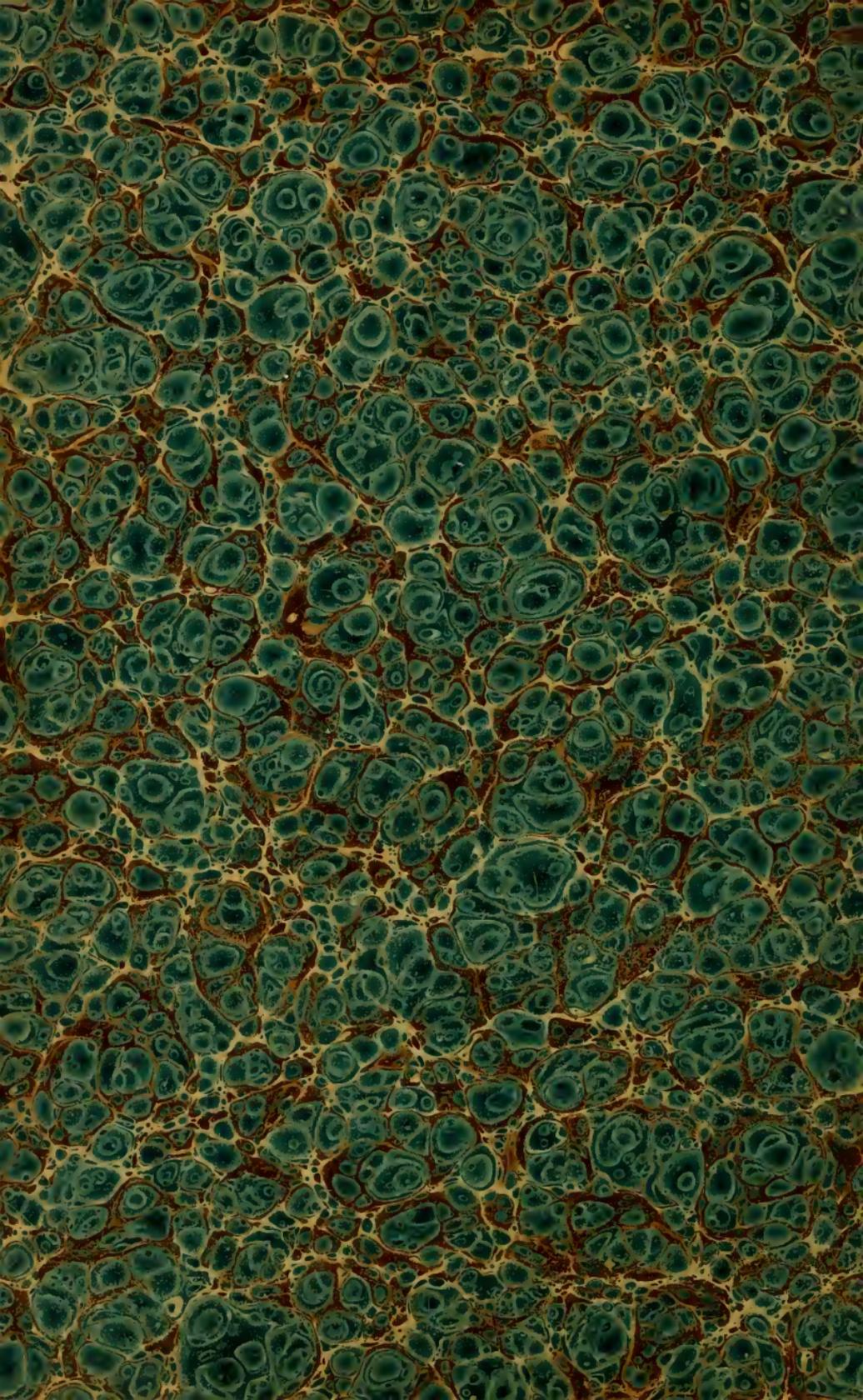
A BOOM IN REGISTERED LETTERS.

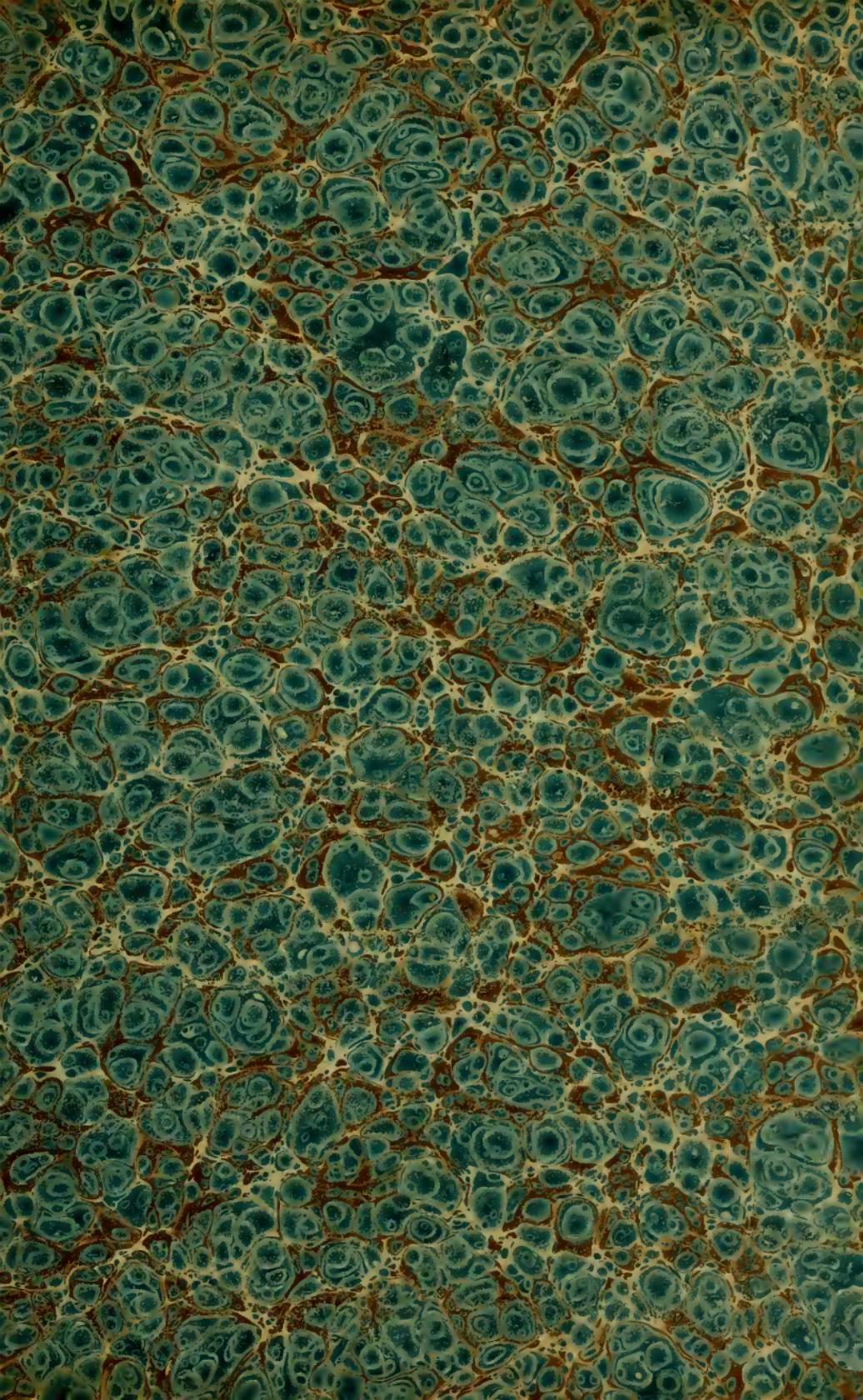
Senator Quay at one time received more registered letters than any other single individual in Washington. These letters were nearly all applications for office, and were registered for two reasons—to prevent loss in the mails and to secure a receipt showing that they were safely delivered. An application for office that comes in an unregistered letter is thrown aside by some people as soon as it is received. If the sender is seen by the person to whom the letter is addressed he can, by stretching the truth, be told that his application was never received. The shrewd office-seeker has learned the method, and the letter is registered to prevent the possibility of such an excuse.

One day Senator Quay received only fifty registered letters, but for each one his name was affixed to as many pieces of pasteboard which the senders carried for months in their inside pockets with the hope of ultimately receiving what they requested.









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